

Grassroots Development

Journal of the Inter-American Foundation

Focus: African Descendants and Development



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The purpose of this journal is to share grassroots development experiences with a variety of readers. The editor encourages submissions on relevant topics including, but not limited to, the following:

- how the poor in Latin America and the Caribbean organize and work to improve their lives;
- issues and trends in the development community;
- how institutions cooperate to further the development of the region.

Please direct query letters to Paula Durbin at the above address or e-mail pdurbin@iaf.gov.

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Letters from Our Readers

I am very pleased to be, once again, drawing upon the IAF approach in my classes with a new group of micro-finance professionals from Central America and the Dominican Republic. We begin each six-month session with lively discussions around metaphors for development borrowed from the new sciences, featured in *Grassroots Development* 2004.

The value of this new perspective is confirmed by these professionals. In our discussions, it has become clear that the role of new technologies—especially the dramatic Internet-related developments of recent years—adds to the potential regional and international impact of a focus on development like that of the IAF.

Our question: Are there publications available, in Spanish and/or English that are addressing the topic of the Internet and its implications for grassroots development, and for having a multiplier effect beyond the local? Could this be a topic worth exploring further? I'm thinking about something more fundamental than the obvious increased dissemination of information or the creation of alliances. Is there someone out there looking for new business models in the NGO sector—especially with a grassroots development orientation—someone looking for the equivalent of the new “user-generated content,” “insourcing,” “supply-chaining,” “Long Tail” business models found these days in the private sector?

Thank you for your good work.

Richard Harris

*California State Polytechnic University
Pomona University*

Thanks for the 2006 edition of the *Grassroots Development* focused on transnational development. You assembled an insight-filled collection of articles and information from IAF staff, grantees and networks which deserves the broadest possible dissemination. I will use it in my classes.

My kudos to Pat Breslin for the 2004 article “Thinking Outside Newton’s Box: Metaphors for Grassroots Development.” For two years now, it has stimulated some of the richest debate and most thoughtful analysis in my graduate course, Civil Society, Development and Peace Building. Keep such metaphors coming!

Charlie Reilly

*Institute for Peace and Justice
University of San Diego*

I am a Ph.D. student in rural development. I found your journal a very helpful and relevant tool to broaden my knowledge and hope to extract from it a topic for my dissertation. I would be grateful if you would include me as a regular recipient of *Grassroots Development*.

Febie N. Penaflor

Benguet, Philippines

I just finished reading your [Kevin Healy's] article in *Desarrollo de Base* 2006; it is an excellent article and one that brought back fond memories.

I was very pleased to see a photo of someone who made a huge impression on me when I worked in the Peace Corps office in Lima. Aquiles Lanao guided me as I stumbled my way through training in the Lima office before I went to the Cusco office as a PCV. We communicated via short-wave radio for my two years there and he helped solve many problems for the volunteers in the highlands.

If you are in touch with him, please send him my saludos and abrazos. Wonderful people like Aquiles led me to a career in Latin American studies where I serve as an advisor and sometimes (when I'm lucky) as a mentor to students studying Latin America.

Shirley Kregar

*Center for Latin American Studies
University of Pittsburgh*

I was leafing through the most recent IAF publication when I encountered the article on Aquiles Lanao. Your evaluation of the FINCA experience in Bolivia is exactly as I remember it and I was in touch with those guys daily, attending many of their meetings and listening to what was going on. As you point out, some good ideas and some mistakes particularly on the in-kind approach. I learned a great deal from Aquiles, and I remember several of his bright, hard-charging daughters as well. I never had the chance to meet Morena. What a great lady. Anyway, a good article and thanks for sharing.

Curt Schaeffer

La Paz, Bolivia

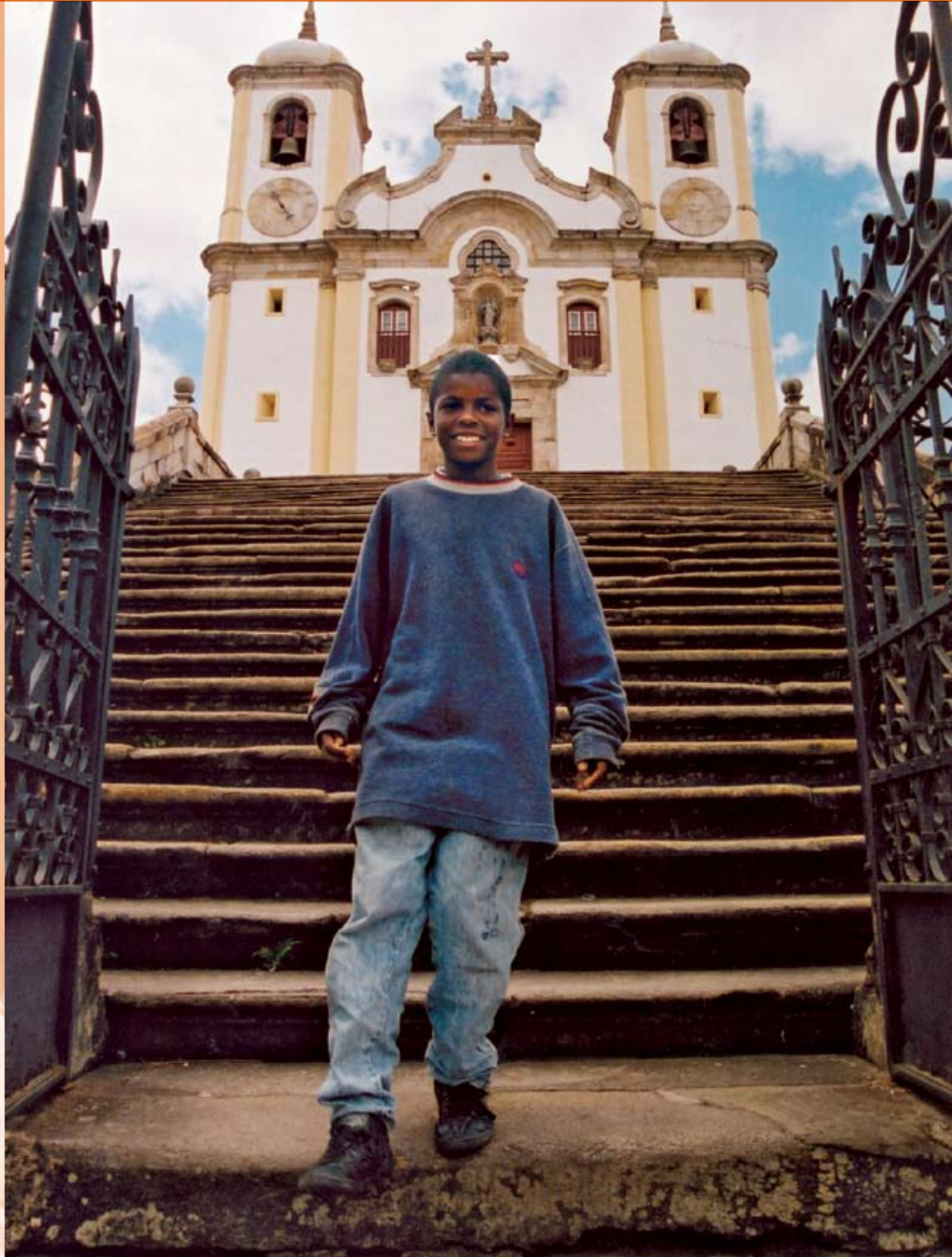
Microfinance Gurus




From the left: Viviana Salinas Lanao, John Hatch, Mimi Hatch, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus and Iris Lanao. Yunus shared the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize with the Grameen Bank, the microcredit institution he developed in Bangladesh. Lanao, of IAF's own pioneering microcredit grantee FINCA-Peru, was profiled, along with John Hatch, in the feature "Ayacucho's Super Savers" by Kevin Healy which appeared in *Grassroots Development* 2006. In announcing its 2006 award, the Nobel Committee said, "Lasting peace cannot be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Microcredit is one such way."



Focus: African Descendants and Development





Latin Americans of African descent, thought to number 150 million, are among this hemisphere's most impoverished citizens. As such, they have been well represented in the IAF's portfolio over nearly four decades, primarily as beneficiaries of a broad array of grantees pursuing disparate routes to better lives. More recently, the IAF has responded to proposals from a growing number of organized groups of African descendants, some well established and others much newer, that have assumed a leadership role in seeking to improve conditions in their communities. The IAF also supports opportunities for individuals to network, advocate, engage in dialogue and brainstorm. This issue of *Grassroots Development* focuses on the advances and challenges of these IAF grantees as they work to define and develop their place in contemporary Latin America.

In an eloquent and insightful article, Robert J. Cottrol analyzes the context framing the issues that drive the demand of present-day African descendants for social and economic justice. Profiles of former and current IAF grantees introduce just a few of the faces of hope and voices of change in the movement to gain equality, cultural recognition and full participation in societies that have themselves for centuries been shaped and sustained by their black citizens. The approach may vary, but everywhere the ultimate goal is to overcome poverty, with powerful cultural traditions providing, as they always have, the incentive to prevail and the connective tissue that binds the community. Cumulatively these grantees' stories of struggle and success are testament to an indomitable spirit and, at the outset of the 21st century, an expanded horizon.

Left: Santa Efigênia dos Pretos is a monument to the organization, creativity and hard work of the African descendants living in 18th century Ouro Preto, Brazil. One of many baroque-era churches constructed with slave labor, Santa Efigênia is exceptional because the town's African descendants built it for themselves, after toiling on other buildings and in the mines that financed Ouro Preto's architectural splendor. According to legend, gold dust shaken from the miners' hair and removed from under their fingernails covered expenses. Construction lasted from 1733 to 1745. Adorned with carvings by a master craftsman and equipped with a full set of snare drums, the church continues to serve an Afro-Brazilian congregation.

Coming Into their Own?

The Afro-Latin Struggle for Equality and Recognition

By Robert J. Cottrol

Most Americans have at least a passing familiarity with the history of Afro-Americans in the United States. The epic story of slavery, the Civil War and Emancipation, Jim Crow, the civil rights struggle, and the Black Power movement has become part of our common heritage. This wasn't always the case. A few short decades ago, the history of Americans of African descent was largely unknown even by black Americans. It was the province of a small number of specialists, not part of our general education or popular culture. The civil rights movement and the demand for a more inclusive history helped change that, bringing about a greater awareness of the role of Afro-Americans in the history of the United States.

Still few Americans know that the Afro-American experience in the United States is but a small part of a much larger hemispheric history. Only about 6 percent of Africans brought to the Americas came to what is now the United States. Today probably less than a third of the hemisphere's Afro-Americans are in the United States. Latin American slavery lasted longer and was more intense than its U.S. counterpart. The Portuguese and Spaniards began enslaving Africans early in the 15th century, before Columbus's voyages to the Americas. Slavery would finally end in the hemisphere when Cuba and Brazil abolished it in the late 1880s.

Latin American historians have long studied slavery in the colonial era. But far less is known about Latin Americans of African descent after independence. There are significant Afro-American populations throughout the region, although some have been reluctant to acknowledge them. Throughout the 20th century, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile have insisted that they were white nations with few or no citizens of African descent. In the last decade, largely due to the insistence of local

Afro-American activists, there has been an increased recognition that African descendants are not just a part of these countries' history but very much a part of the present, even if in small numbers. Peru and Mexico have tended to emphasize their Spanish and indigenous lineage, ignoring the substantial African heritage. In the Dominican Republic, people visibly of African descent constitute a majority, but because African ancestry is stigmatized it is commonly denied even when it is obvious. In all of these countries, Afro-Latin activists are changing the national dialogue by insisting that the African and Afro-American contribution to the national culture be recognized.

The last decade has seen the rise of an Afro-Latin civil rights movement. It has had two primary objectives. The first has been to fight against the significant racial inequalities that exist throughout Latin America. Some of these are admittedly structural, a consequence of constricted opportunities for poor and working class people. Others are clearly due to racism, discrimination and negative attitudes that result in lesser opportunities in employment and schooling or in worse treatment by police officers and other government agents. Beyond the fight against inequality and discrimination, the contemporary struggle of Afro-Latin activists is also in large part a demand for recognition. Racism and racial ideologies in many nations have often marginalized African descendants in Latin America. Whites have been valued as members of a superior race and bearers of a superior culture. Indigenous populations have often been romanticized as reminders of a noble pre-Columbian past, even, it should be added, while today they are subject to fierce discrimination. But Afro-Americans remain marginalized and historically unacknowledged, except as an exotic element in the national culture.

Afro-Latin activists face daunting challenges, perhaps most importantly a lack of basic information on Afro-American populations. Often it is difficult, if not impossible, to gain from census and other official records an accurate picture of the social and economic circumstances of different racial groups. Despite substantial populations of African descent throughout the Americas, their history is often not well-known, even by regional specialists. Racial classifications further complicate the task. Who should or should not be categorized as Afro-Brazilian, Afro-Colombian or Afro-Mexican can be unclear and, frequently, a matter of dispute. Students of race in the United States study a society whose culture and law have traditionally dictated that all persons with any traceable African ancestry belong to a single group—variously called colored, Negro, black, Afro-American, African American—but a unified group nonetheless. There has been occasional recognition that some individuals are of mixed ancestry and stand apart; terms like mulatto, quadroon and octoroon were used in the past and there are contemporary debates about proposed census categories like biracial or multiracial. But recognition of mixture has not disturbed the consensus placing people with traceable African ancestry into a single group.

No such consensus exists in Latin America. If race is a social construct, it is often an elusive one for Latin Americans as well as outsiders. Spanish and Portuguese have meticulous vocabularies detailing every conceivable combination, real and imagined. Latin American lexicons include terms like *negro*, *preto*, *pardo*, *moreno*, *mulato*, *trigueño*, *zambo* and others detailing presumed degrees of African, European and indigenous admixtures. Traditionally individuals of partial African descent have rejected identification as *negro*, or black, a rejection supported by the prevailing culture. Some individuals with known African ancestry are accepted as white. In Latin America racial identity often is a complex negotiation involving ancestry, phenotype, social status and family connections. Classification is contextual. A hierarchy exists to be sure and it prizes European descent and appearance more than African ones. Yet at times whites will allow Afro-Latins to proclaim a whiter status than phenotype and ancestry might dictate, partly as a courtesy, partly because

it confirms the view of many whites that they live in essentially white societies. Despite this, the individual of visible African descent who claims to be white will often be the victim of race- or color-based exclusion. The picture becomes even cloudier when individuals who look white or nearly white identify with Afro-Americans for familial or cultural reasons.

This notion of racial fluidity has created difficulties both for scholars researching Afro-Latins and for Afro-Latin activists seeking to mobilize a constituency. In many important ways, legal discrimination in the United States helped to forge a unified group. In Latin America, the multiplicity of racial/color categories coupled with the ideologies of *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento* that read Afro-Americans out of the history and culture also served to blunt the development of Afro-American group consciousness and identity. This was true even in areas where people of visible African ancestry faced considerable racial discrimination. And yet if group consciousness and concerted action have been difficult, Latin America does have a history of Afro-American political and social activism that has challenged class and color barriers. This theme has been explored by, among others, George Reid Andrews in his book *Afro-Latin America, 1800–2000*. The Afro-Latin struggle against racial subordination began in slavery. Colonial Latin America was dotted with cimarrón settlements of runaway slaves defying recapture. Their descendants are still to be found in Brazilian quilombos and similar enclaves throughout the hemisphere.

Rebellious *cimarrón* communities were one of many forms of slave resistance in Latin America where slaves played crucial roles in their own liberation. Some purchased themselves and family members. Others ran away and blended into free populations. The struggle for freedom met with success not only in venues where slaveholding was relatively benign but also in regions where the lives of slaves could be hellish and short. Such was the case with Brazil which received more African captives than any other American society. Its slavery was brutal and often deadly. But Brazil also had a large free Afro-Brazilian population whose members formally had equal rights with whites. Some were government officials and in the upper strata of Brazilian society.

The early 19th century saw new challenges to New World slave systems. The enlightenment and the revolutions it inspired—the American, the French, the Haitian and the Spanish-American wars for independence—created problems. The American Revolution brought emancipation to the northern states and helped create a national unease with slavery. Haiti's revolution ended the hemisphere's most lucrative slave system. Emancipation was also a result of Spanish America's wars for independence, not simply as the result of enlightenment influence. The Afro-American contribution to winning independence played a critical role in accelerating the end of slavery. The newly independent Brazilian empire would remain an active participant in the slave trade well into the 1850s. Eventually, in 1871, influenced by the example of abolition in the U.S. and strong European, particularly French, anti-slavery sentiment, the country enacted a "Free-Womb Law" proclaiming freedom for children born of slave mothers from that year forward. Final abolition occurred in 1888 under Brazil's last emperor, Dom Pedro II. Spain's last two American colonies, Cuba and Puerto Rico, were the last Spanish-speaking territories to maintain slavery. The boom in sugar production that made Cuba a major center of the African slave trade in the 19th century also made the island one of the most vigorous slave economies in the hemisphere, which brought new restrictions on the rights of free Afro-Cubans. Abolition would finally come in 1886. Afro-Cubans would later figure prominently in the struggle for independence, but strong racial division would remain well into the 20th century, a legacy of the sugar and slave economy.

Racism prevailed throughout the hemisphere. New ideologies at the start of the 20th century were helping to move the Afro-American and indigenous peoples of Latin America further to the margins of their nations' societies and cultures. For students of U.S. history, the role of scientific racism and social Darwinism in providing the intellectual underpinnings for Jim Crow and disenfranchisement are well known. These forces influenced thinking in Latin America, but in different ways. Latin American elites saw the problem less as in terms of protecting their privilege and status than in attaining the white majority they believed required for progress

and modernity. To this end large-scale European immigration was encouraged, often by generous land bounties. It would transform Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil. Other nations would receive far fewer Europeans, but their strong desire for *blanqueamiento* further marginalized Afro-Latins. Cultural dynamics from the slave era had long dictated that the individual should strive for racial mobility via lighter racial classification. If the national ethos dictated that the nation was white, it was all the more prudent, particularly for those of mixed ancestry, not to declare an African heritage. Thus *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento* both contributed to the pronounced unwillingness of many Afro-Latins to identify as such, even when phenotype made such identification and the resulting discrimination inescapable.

Still there was, in the early part of the 20th century, an often symbiotic relationship between African-derived modes of cultural expression, including *santería* in Cuba and *candomblé* in Brazil, and the forging of Afro-American identities and strategies to resist discrimination. These strategies at times included the organization of Afro-American political parties and protest groups. At other times they took the form of support for populist political leaders such as Costa Rica's José Figueres or Venezuela's Rómulo Betancourt on the left or Brazil's Getúlio Vargas and Argentina's Juan Perón on the right. If social and political activism helped thwart the effort to totally marginalize Afro-Latins, demography also made it impossible to ignore their presence in many societies. Its sheer size in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Venezuela made some Latin American leaders reconsider the idea that Afro-Americans would ultimately vanish. Instead they came to realize that the Afro-American presence was permanent, impossible to ignore, an inescapable part of the national identity. In Central America, the issue was further complicated by immigration from the English-speaking Caribbean in the 20th century. Brought to Panama to labor on the Canal or to Costa Rica to work on railroads, docks and banana plantations, the immigrants would often add a note of both cultural and racial dissonance to societies whose preferred self-image was racially white and culturally Spanish.

Later in the 20th century the Afro-American struggle against inequality took on broader signifi-

cance. It said something about how nations would be viewed abroad and how they would come to view themselves. The concern with international image and the struggle against Jim Crow is familiar territory to students of mid-20th century U.S. history. Latin American elites also had such a concern. Both the increasing rejection of scientific racism in the Western world and the realization that Afro-Americans would not disappear contributed to a new view, the idea of racial democracy. Latin American elites began to proclaim that their nations were exemplars of racial equality and harmony, with Brazil leading, aided by the government and by nationalistic social scientists like Gilberto Freyre.

This new thinking was made convincing by the contrast between legal segregation in the U.S. South and the absence of official discrimination in Latin America. The racial democracy thesis and the view that North Americans could learn lessons in racial harmony spread to the U.S. through the writings of Frank Tannenbaum and others. Although it is now popular to discredit this view as a myth, it is undeniable that, long before World War II, Latin Americans with acknowledged African ancestry had the possibility of gaining access to sectors of society undreamed of in the United States. In the 19th century, Mexico and Argentina elected presidents believed to be of African descent; in the mid-20th century Cuba and Venezuela had Afro-American presidents, Fulgencio Batista and Rómulo Betancourt. Other nations had Afro-American cabinet members and senior military officers. The racial democracy thesis was less myth than overstatement.

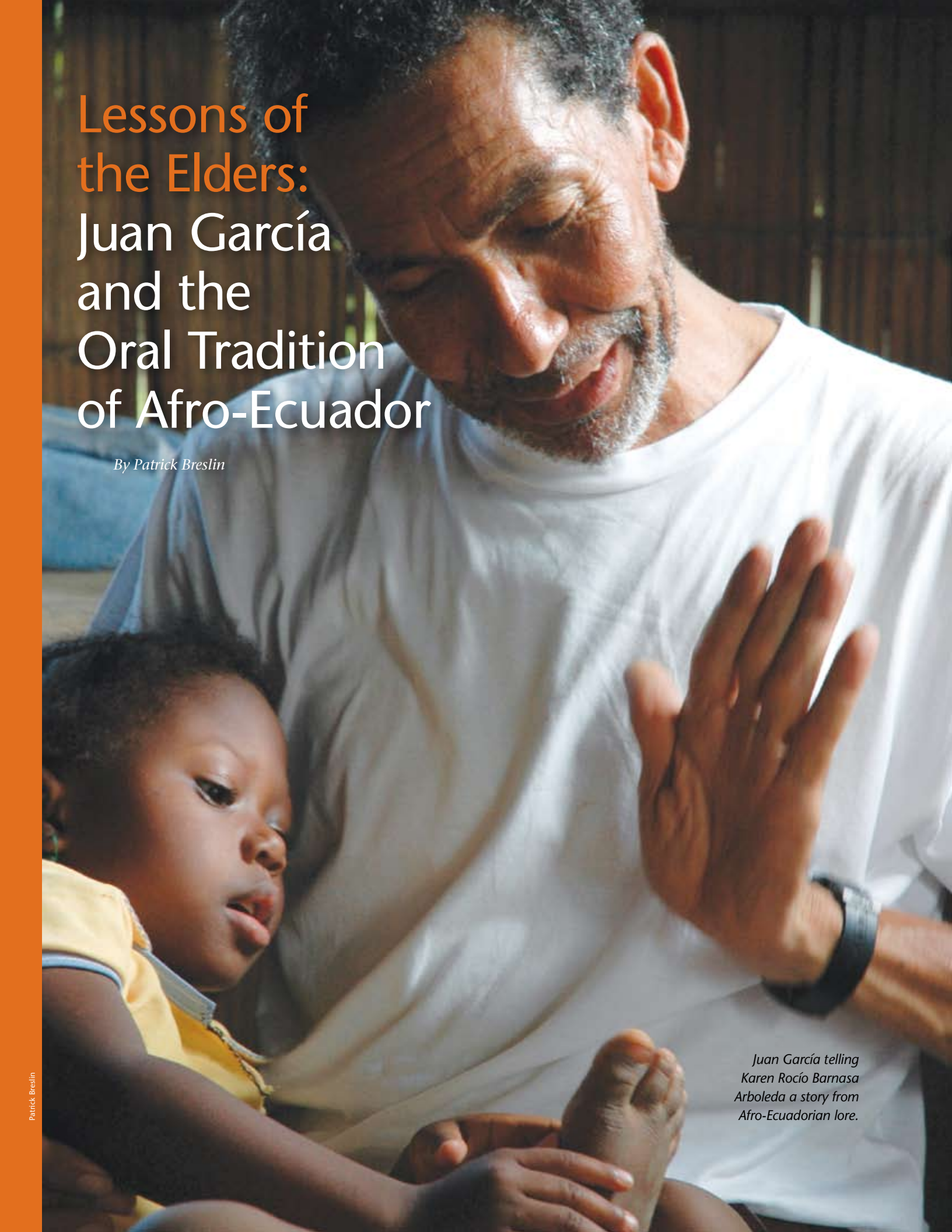
But that overstatement helped mask tremendous racism and racial inequality. If the fluidity of racial interaction in Latin America in the 1940s and 1950s contrasted with the rigidity of a formally segregated United States, that kind of comparison has been less easy since the 1960s. Since the fall of Jim Crow, Afro-Latin activists have compared the success of the U.S. civil rights movement with their own exclusion. Afro-Latin activists in recent decades have been inclined to contrast the greater access of U.S. blacks to educational and occupational mobility with the relative absence of such possibilities in their own societies.

In the last two decades, the Afro-Latin struggle against discrimination and for greater inclusion has met with a measure of success. All nations of Latin America have incorporated anti-discrimination measures into their statutes and constitutions. They have also signed international protocols against discrimination. Knowledgeable observers note that these legal measures while making an important normative statement often have mixed results as a matter of practical enforcement. Some nations have gone further in the effort to attack discrimination. Starting in 2001 Brazil began some preliminary, and still contested steps, toward affirmative action in university admissions and government hiring. By law, Brazil, Colombia, Nicaragua and Honduras recognize land rights for Afro-American communities founded by fugitive slaves.

Although negative stereotyping still exists to be sure, Afro-Latin activists seem to have made some gains in the quest for greater recognition. Brazilian law now requires the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history in primary and secondary schools. More and more Afro-Brazilian journalists are featured on TV news programs. In Mexico there seems to be a greater willingness to acknowledge *la tercera raíz*, the African and Afro-Mexican component of the nation's history and culture. There appears to be increasing interest in the Afro-Argentine past and present; recent books and films examine the topic, and the Argentine government has conducted a census of Argentines of African ancestry.

These breakthroughs are the results of hard work and dedicated activism on the part of an emerging Afro-Latin movement that itself is part of a larger effort to re-examine the role of race in Latin American life. It is a process that is just beginning.

Robert J. Cottrol is the Harold Paul Green Research Professor of Law and Professor of History and Sociology at the George Washington University. His numerous publications include Brown v. Board of Education: Caste, Culture and the Constitution (University of Kansas Press: 2003). He is currently working on a book examining the role of law in constructing racial hierarchies and cultures in the Americas. Dr. Cottrol's article for Grassroots Development draws from his review of Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000 in the June 2005 American Quarterly published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.



Lessons of the Elders: Juan García and the Oral Tradition of Afro-Ecuador

By Patrick Breslin

*Juan García telling
Karen Rocío Barnasa
Arboleda a story from
Afro-Ecuadorian lore.*

When the National Museum of African American History and Culture opens in 2015 on the Mall in Washington, D.C., among the thousands of artifacts from the African experience in the Americas will be a small carved stool of clear tropical hardwood etched with a spider web motif. The stool was shaped to fit in a narrow dugout canoe that carried Deborah Azareno on the rivers of Ecuador's Esmeraldas province more than 60 years ago. After poling the canoe into the muddy banks near where the Rio Santiago empties into the Pacific, she would carry the stool into her home and sit on it as she told her grandson stories. In 2005, long before ground was broken on the Mall, her stool became the museum's first official acquisition. This is how that came about.

Some 350,000 Ecuadorians of African descent live in the Pacific coast lowlands of Esmeraldas province. Starting in the 16th century, their ancestors arrived there as slaves, as runaways from Colombia or as shipwreck survivors. They cleared land and mined gold under duress, and escaped into the rainforests when they could, forming *palenques*, self-governing black communities, infrequently clashing, more often living in peace with the native indigenous peoples. They fought for Bolívar and South American independence early in the 19th century, but did not gain their own freedom until decades later, and then, in many cases, only on paper. As in the Southern United States, new forms of exploitation blighted emancipation hopes. Except when needed to fill the ranks of revolutionary armies, they generally lived quite isolated from and ignored by the highland political and economic centers 10,000 feet above them in the Andean clouds. They had almost no voice in Ecuador's national conversation.

Juan García Salazar changed that with a tape recorder. García is a rail-thin man of medium height, born in 1944 and still lithe as a dancer. His slimness seems to elongate his limbs; his fingers, extended in gestures as he talks, could come from a painting by Oswaldo Guayasamín, Ecuador's best known artist. He has the expressive face of an actor. The eyebrows and creases on his forehead arch into concentric curves of amazement when he's telling a story. With almost no formal training, García became a renowned collector and conservator of the oral traditions of the Afro-Ecuadorians. Their past and perhaps the keys to their future are stored on the coiled tape inside the thousands of cassettes García recorded over three decades.

Last year, as part of research on grassroots leaders in Latin America, I spent a week in Esmeraldas with Juan García. I'd first met him in Quito, and written about him, more than 20 years earlier. Now I wanted to interview him about his life's work and to see how that work was connected to the growth of the Afro-Ecuadorian movement in Esmeraldas. Juan had been invited to speak at a parish in San Lorenzo the next day and he invited me along.

We hired a car and driver, a man named Paco Ortiz who told us he lived a few blocks from Juan in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Esmeraldas. Juan sat in front. We passed the airport and followed the pot-holed coastal road running north toward the Colombian border. Trucks stacked with mountain eucalyptus destined for Japan's paper mills roared south. Grass grew from the older potholes. The seat belts ratcheted tighter around our chests as the car lurched over them. Juan began the conversation with questions about Paco's parents and grew animated as he realized that Paco's father, a school teacher, had taught his third- or fourth-grade class in Limones. Did an aunt of Paco's own a bakery Juan remembered? Paco confirmed it. The conversation went on, tracing respective family trees.

"We don't naturally join associations," Juan later told me. "You have to begin with the family. The family is solidarity here, not the cooperative, which was imported." The next day, we rode a motorboat from Borbón to Limones, to visit Juan's mother. The pilot walked with us to her house. Juan introduced him to his mother. "Of which family?" was her first question.

García's father was a medical doctor fleeing Franco's dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War, his



García in 1986, five years into his work recording Afro-Ecuadorian history, legends and poetry.

mother, Juana Salazar, an esmeraldeña. “Down on the coast, you take in your culture with your mother’s milk,” he once told me. The family lived near the mouth of the Santiago river at a place called El Cuerval because of the crows (*cuervos*) that congregate there on dead tree branches in the river. His maternal grandfather, Zenón Salazar, raised his family on subsistence crops and fish and sold sugarcane to a nearby mill. The area was later bulldozed for shrimp farms, which have since failed, and the only sounds now come from the crows.

García remembers his father cursing Franco. He wanted his children to study and he talked of returning to Europe one day. There was a small group of Spanish exiles in the area. “Most of the Europeans who came here died of nostalgia,” García said. When he was six, a heart attack took his father, and his

mother sent him to live with friends and attend school in Limones. He finished the primary grades, and with that, his formal childhood education. In a church-run technical school, he learned carpentry.

The rivers were Esmeraldas’ highways and the Humboldt current coursing up from Antarctica its interstate. García knew both from an early age. “We’re people of the sea,” he said. He remembers helping row outrigger canoes through the ocean waves at the river mouth and out to *la altura* where they found the Humboldt, raised a billowing sail of grain sacks sewn together and rode the current “down” to Tumaco, the Colombian city north of Ecuador, to trade their

products. Travel on the inland rivers was more placid, the canoes skimming through the sheen of sunlight spread over the water’s glass-smooth surface, past occasional houses of wood and cane shaded by coconut trees, simple clothing hanging on a line to dry.

García traveled widely, eventually managing a small factory in Bogotá. There, he sat in on university classes. Discussions with students led him to reflect on Ecuador and Esmeraldas. He began to wonder why there were no monuments to blacks in Ecuador. He returned home to care for his dying grandfather, a two-year commitment that changed his life. The old man’s memory was a storehouse of folk history and wisdom. “Some people in the community told me, ‘Look Juan, Don Zenón is not going to die for many years because he knows magic, and when people know magic, the body can die, but the head, no.

You have to let him transfer to you this weight he bears.” García listened to his grandfather pour out his knowledge. When the old man mentioned a relative in Playa de Oro who had other knowledge, García borrowed a large tape recorder and traveled there to make his first recordings.

“This was in the 1970s and I was preoccupied with the question of my identity—not yet a precise sense of cultural identity, but I knew there was something I lacked, some void. It came at the same time as my grandfather’s decline, a very important time for me. It was a return after a period of wandering, a vagabond life, through Guayaquil, Quevedo, Colombia. A return to the ancestors, to my cultural roots. The old people say that you have to send the young ones off on a journey, to work, to form themselves. To learn practical things, to manage a canoe, sails, learn the waves, the trees, distinguish good land from bad. All that was very useful for me.”

But the Esmeraldas to which he returned was poor. “We all had development in our heads those years, the idea of forming organizations to better our lives, in economic terms. And it was by getting involved in development that I discovered culture, that I discovered what was lacking.”

From 1972 to 1978, Juan worked as a cooperative organizer. “After the first three years, I started to realize that this kind of organization was foreign to people here. We would have meetings with technicians from cooperatives in Israel, in Germany or in the mountains of Ecuador. I saw that they had no affinity with us, nor did the project they described to us have any affinity with who we really were. I knew we had to include something else in this work with the people.”

The cooperatives had credits from Ecuador’s Central Bank, so bank officials knew García’s work. Around 1978, they offered him a job organizing in the community of La Tolita, a small river town built over an archaeological treasure trove of gold nose rings and earrings, tiny masks, and ceramic animal and human figures. The bank would provide credit and Juan would teach the community about economic alternatives to

selling off the prehistoric pieces they found, thus safeguarding Ecuador’s cultural patrimony.

“And there,” García said, “I came face to face with the question of what a national culture is. Because the people in La Tolita, the *guaqueros* who dug up these pieces, saw things more clearly than I did. ‘These pieces don’t come from us,’ they said. ‘They have nothing to do with us.’ And I realized that this was about preserving a national patrimony in which we were not included. We weren’t meant to benefit from these vestiges. The people also made me see that while the bank was paying half a million or maybe a million *suces* to the technical experts and foreigners on the archaeological project, they were putting maybe 10,000 or 5,000 *suces* into the community organizations. Pretty soon, I decided to resign my job with the bank to work on my own sense of cultural preservation.”

Through talks he had given about Esmeraldas in Quito, García had met Chuck Kleymeyer, then the Inter-American Foundation representative for Ecuador. Out of their discussions García crafted a proposal requesting support for a systematic effort to record as much of the Afro-Ecuadorian oral tradition as possible. He already saw it slipping away as old people died and the younger generation, drawn to cities like Guayaquil, was losing its connection to the rivers and the forests and the centuries-old way of life. At the same time, García and a few colleagues with similar interests had organized the Centro Cultural Afro-Ecuatoriano in Quito as a place for reflection on their people’s experience. All the currents of Afro-Ecuadorian thought were expressed there, from the revolutionary to the purely economic. And one current focused on Afro culture and sense of identity.

The IAF’s support for García’s work began in 1981 with grants to the Programa de Antropología para el Ecuador to cover outboard motors, travel expenses, tape recorders, cassettes and salaries for García and his team of assistants drawn from Center members with cultural interests. They began work both in Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley, home to the country’s other concentration of Afro-Ecuadorians. “It



Patrick Breslin

Benildo Torres Riasco, *decimero*.

was in that process of recording that we really began to educate ourselves. At first, we weren't thinking so much of identity, of territory, of the oral tradition as knowledge. It was simply to recover all that was in memory, so that it wouldn't be lost.

"The first lesson, for me the most important, was that we were completely ignorant. The old people were talking to us, and we knew almost nothing. We didn't understand. Our central question was about the past. We wanted the old people to tell us what they remembered of how life used to be. Only gradually did we recognize the role each of them played in the culture, that they were specialists, with different skills, different wisdom. For example, Benildo Torres, the man I'm working with now, we interviewed years ago, and we only had two cassettes with a few *décimas* (a complex form of medieval Spanish poetry that had taken root among Africans in Spain's American colonies). It's only now, 20 years later, that I'm asking why

we didn't ask Benildo more. We hadn't gone to him understanding that he was really a great *decimero*. We didn't understand his importance in the culture. And that happened with many people."

Still, they were learning every day, and the tape recorders kept spinning and the stacks of cassettes mounted. "By the time the project ended, I felt as if I'd emerged from a university," García said. Afterwards, the researchers took different directions, those from Chota returning to work there. "And here in Esmeraldas, we divided into three groups—those who decided to work politically, those who concentrated on economic development, and the cultural project, which was basically me but the others told me, 'You're the custodian of all we have done, of the photos, the cassettes, all the memory.'"

Like his grandfather, García had assumed responsibility for the oral tradition of a people. He had to find ways to safeguard the material. The Central Bank helped with copies and stored some of the material, as did the Esmeraldas Museum. But just storing it was not enough. The cassettes, kept in air conditioned rooms against the swamp-like humidity of Esmeraldas, still have to be run through a machine and rewind periodically. And while Juan was preoccupied with such details, the Afro-Ecuadorians in Esmeraldas were concerned with other matters. "People said to me, 'Juan, all this about the culture, all this knowledge, how is it of use if they're taking away our land?' So I started awakening to new realities. They made me see that all this baggage in the head was of no use without a territorial space, no use without a project that would put food on the table, no use unless the people had a house to live in. 'Without territory, where do we preserve the culture?' they demanded. And at first, I responded, 'Well, on the cassettes.' But they said 'No, where do we preserve the creation of the culture? The rivers have been taken away. The ancient cemetery was destroyed to put in a highway. There went our memories. What do we do now?'"

The loss of land was a refrain in Esmeraldas. The shrimp farms that had obliterated the mangroves and agricultural land around Juan's childhood

home were only one of many plans meant to wrest profit from what outsiders considered unproductive jungle. Invariably, the new enterprises were enclaves, producing for foreign markets and offering limited jobs to local people. Decades earlier, large tracts of Esmeraldas were razed to produce bananas. Today, regiments of African palm oil trees march across the landscape, occupying tens of thousands of hectares. Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous groups with traditional claims to land rather than title have often been brushed aside.

Shortly after the IAF project ended, Juan enrolled at the Johns Hopkins University, where he wrote a thesis on Alonso Sebastián de Illesca, the most famous of Esmeraldas' *cimarrón* leaders, whom the English pirate Francis Drake came to visit. Illesca had an indigenous wife and married some of his children into the families of indigenous leaders, cementing his rule in the region. His success and many other examples of African autonomy in Esmeraldas inspired Juan's ideas about Afro-Ecuadorians' need for self-sufficiency on their own land. "I use the past to illustrate that there is a fountain of thought, of philosophy, of experience, to which we can return. There were times when we were self-sufficient. Not that we had a lot, but that we didn't need anything more. And those times were better than the present, when we are included in somebody else's project. Because when you're included, it's difficult to be yourself. The power, the hegemony, belongs to the one who includes you. That's why I say it was better when we lived free within our own cultural reality, managing our own resources, with our own philosophy. And why I insist that the Afro community use what we learn of the past as the starting point for integration today."

Returning to Ecuador, Juan worked for a time with development projects funded by IAF, sometimes passing on the lessons of the oral tradition in Esmeraldas. Then he moved to the town of Maldonado to manage a Conservation International-funded project to preserve the forest and raise incomes through the production of decorative and useful articles such as buttons for clothing made from *tagua*—a palm tree nut with the color and quali-

ties of ivory. Juan had suggested this project because, in his emerging understanding of development, it made sense.

"It was nourished by the culture. I was thinking that if you want to reduce the impact on the environment, especially the forests, a project has to be traditional, in the sense of using a traditional product, one that people understand and have experience with, and it has to have a market, so that it generates income. *Tagua* falls from the trees. In the 1920s, when Germans would come to buy it, it was something of an economic bonanza. In the oral tradition, people talk of 'the age of *tagua*.' And there are many stories about going to the forest to collect the nuts. Our goal was to revitalize the market and raise the prices. We were in an area without electricity, so the work was done with hand tools. We were successful in finding markets, and that reanimated the cultivation of *tagua* palm trees. Visitors invariably urged us to get electric generators and motors, but I insisted we didn't need them. The way we worked, the people kept their autonomy. All they had to do was go to the forest, harvest the *tagua* nuts, make the buttons or chess pieces, and sell them. We managed to sell quantities as far away as New York. For the first time, we had linked the culture with a marketing project aimed at development.

"But there was this major problem in the region—land. I was working with 32 communities. The benefit of all the projects that I've done is that I'm always on the move, always visiting communities, listening to people. And what kept coming up was that we were losing the land. Despite talk of environmentalism, the government was opening more and more agricultural land to vast African palm plantations. And there was continuing pressure from colonists moving into Esmeraldas from other parts of Ecuador. The need to organize the community was urgent."

An opportunity appeared in 1995 when Juan won a four-year Ashoka fellowship for his proposal to develop a way of framing the discussion of issues affecting Esmeraldas' African descendants that would help their communities defend their rights, especially their land claims. Ashoka is a U.S.-based NGO that



Patrick Breslin

A Project's Ripple Effect

"And always when people ask me where did this begin, it began with the Afro-Ecuadorian Cultural Center we founded in Quito, and with the help from the Inter-American Foundation. The project made it possible for us, a group of young people from Chota, from Esmeraldas, from Guayaquil, to travel around the country, talking about ourselves, our people. It was the first time that someone had financed the spoken word. The first time that someone put up money so that people could talk about themselves. Do you realize the significance of that? That a U.S. foundation put up money so that you have time to converse about yourselves. What a beautiful idea. That someone finances you to talk with the elders, to learn, to recover. That for me was the most symbolic thing about this project, the most beautiful thing. What was generated there cannot be measured yet, because the waves it started haven't stopped. And many waves were generated."—*Juan García in reference to the origin of Articles 83 and 84 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, addressing the rights of Afro-Ecuadorians.*

García with the stool Deborah Azareno used as she traveled the waterways of Esmeraldas province, which became the first official acquisition of the National Museum of African American History and Culture scheduled to open in 2015.

supports "social entrepreneurs" around the world, allowing them to work full-time on their ideas for change and development. To start his political work, Juan went back to the recordings. "We took the voice of the ancestors from the cassettes and we put it on the table for political discussions." He visited community groups, cooperatives, training centers, church-supported groups. "I said, 'Listen to what the ancestors have to say: about the land, the rivers, the crops, about our presence here.' And people would listen, and say, 'So we lived in this region from, I don't know, 1670?' And someone else would ask, 'And Ecuador existed?' 'No, it didn't exist.' 'So we were here before Ecuador? When Ecuador did not yet exist, we were here, and we had land?'"

Once the discussions began, the cassette tapes were no longer just the echo of the past. Now, complemented by Juan's previous experiences, they provided ideas for the future. "I began to use the oral tradition to design a political discourse based on what I had studied in the university, the local history I had learned, my knowledge of the communities, the *tagua* project, the cooperatives. It was the sum of all that I had previously done. I worked with orga-

nizations, proposing that we use our traditions, for example, that instead of calling ourselves cooperative associations, we use the term *palenque*, which took on many meanings. Beyond physical territory, it represents a cultural space, a safe haven, an enclave of resistance to threats from outside.

Juan's political work coincided with changes in Ecuador. "If we compare the situation now with where we were in the 1970s, it's incalculable how much we've advanced. We're in the Constitution. The term *Afro-Ecuadoriano* is written in the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador. For me, that is like the officially recognized birth of the black community in the political and social world here. When they were writing the Constitution, there were three of us standing outside, full-time, talking, struggling, and we finally got in the Constitution. And now you hear people talk about Articles 83 and 84, about collective rights. You have no idea how often you hear people refer to those articles."

Rights enumerated address the preservation and development of cultural identity and cultural and social traditions, including ways of organizing and administering justice; the nontransferable owner-

ship of ancestral community lands; and the shared use of renewable natural resources and consultation on projects to exploit them. These rights made possible the formation of new Afro-Ecuadorian organizations in Esmeraldas that drew on their own traditions. “The communities,” said Juan, “formed their territorial *palenques*, some of them with up to 30 communities, with legal status, with their own bylaws. There are eight *palenques* now; one has 62,000 hectares. And others formed without any land at all; 40 cultural groups in Guayaquil, for example, decided to form a *palenque*.”

Where this process of organization goes next is unclear, but Juan has moved on. He devoted the four years with Ashoka support to political organizing—“the best four years of my life,” he says. But he doesn’t see political organizing as his main project any longer. “Now there are centers where the future leaders can be trained. Now I’m going to write.”

He has three major goals, and plans to spend about four years on each. The first is to complete a series of publications based on the recordings and his ongoing research. The second goal builds on the publications. He wants to get the material about Afro-Ecuadorian history and culture into the school systems so that education in Esmeraldas will be less alienating than he finds it today. Even though it’s a long-term goal, Juan takes every opportunity to advance it. An example of what he has in mind was on view one night when about 40 people gathered at the Casa Palenque, a church-supported meeting place in the city of Esmeraldas. They included teachers, a few nuns, priests, a couple of former gang members, who had come for Juan’s workshop on the oral tradition. *El río*—the river—was the topic. Juan brought a series of brief readings drawn from conversations with people about their lives on the rivers of Esmeraldas recorded over the past three decades. He wanted to challenge the argument he’s heard from some teachers that they would like to teach Afro-Ecuadorian culture and history, but they have no material.

Juan passed out the sheets and asked participants to read. There were observations about the

rivers becoming more polluted, about colonists from other regions taking land along the rivers, about the contrast between travel on the roads and travel on the rivers. When, after each two or three paragraphs, Juan interrupted to ask for reflections, all the themes that affect Esmeraldas came pouring out. A discussion started up about potable water systems. Someone observed that the government charges communities for pipes and wells. But in the readings, the old people Juan interviewed recall when the rivers ran clean. Is it fair that the people who didn’t contaminate the rivers now have to pay for potable water? Why can’t the government just keep the rivers pure? The final reading was a lyrical description of the beauty of light on the river, like diamonds floating on its surface. An animated 90-minute discussion, ranging over history, politics, economics, the environment and literature had evolved from an excerpt totaling no more than 10 minutes from Juan’s thousands of hours of recordings.

Juan’s third four-year plan—he seems to think in four-year episodes—is to tie all his work together with an exploration of the connections between African and Afro-Ecuadorian culture that digs down to the roots. He is already at work on three stories that he thinks demonstrate the connections—one from Esmeraldas, one from the Chota Valley, and one from West Africa that he translated from French. In a sense, Juan already made that link in 2005 when he brought his grandmother’s canoe stool with its spider design, the West African *anansi* figure, to the offices of Lonnie Bunch III, director of the National Museum of African-American History and Culture, and Smithsonian official John W. Franklin, who accepted it as the museum’s first official acquisition. *Anansi*, according to West African lore, first brought stories to the world. It was a fitting gift to the museum from a man who has kept so many of them from disappearing.

Patrick Breslin retired from the IAF in March after 22 years of service, most recently as vice president heading the Office of External Affairs.

More Options in Esmeraldas

By Marnie Schilken

Esmeraldas' African descendants were left a legacy of land in the most remote reaches of the province, where their ancestors had carved out their safe havens. But continued isolation means that these Afro-Ecuadorians are often without access to basic infrastructure, utilities, health services, schooling or economic opportunity. The unemployment rate in rural Esmeraldas has reached 70 percent, prompting many to leave for urban areas in search of work. As noted in a 1995 study by the Inter-American Development Bank, this migration is reflected in the growing numbers of Afro-Ecuadorians who live in abject poverty on the outskirts and the hillsides of the city of Esmeraldas, the provincial capital.

Fundación Para La Tecnología y el Desarrollo Latinoamericano-Ecuatoriano (FTDE), a small, Quito-based NGO, has been helping more than 30 rural communities in Esmeraldas address their extreme poverty. In 2003 and 2004, FTDE facilitated community meetings where 540 residents brainstormed solutions to local problems. The participants invited FTDE to help turn plans into action, and in September 2005 FTDE received a grant for \$220,030 from the IAF to provide training in alternative agricultural practices as well as to conduct activities that would improve networking, organizing, social cohesion and collective problem-solving.

The African descendants served by FTDE, like the majority of Afro-Ecuadorians, are struggling to get their basic needs recognized and addressed by local, regional and national authorities. The few programs that could help do not reach many Afro-Ecuadorians for a variety of reasons, including distance, prohibitive fees and a lack of awareness that such programs even exist. Afro-Ecuadorians attempting to access services have little time left for civic participation and little energy to fight racial prejudice.

FTDE started by convening a group of 10 individuals, "primary community promoters," who had been

selected by their neighbors to identify community needs and outline a work plan. With the help of these promoters, FTDE then trained another 40 secondary community promoters in leadership, community organizing, agricultural techniques, micro-enterprise management and marketing. These men and women, ranging in age from 13 to 70, often hike three to four hours, or travel by raft when roads become impassable, to reach communities where they pass on their training and education, and help facilitate discussions about community needs. Promoters have learned to be creative. People normally work most of the day isolated on their small farms and they crave social interaction. So the training sessions often end with an opportunity to relax and enjoy soccer and bingo, which encourages attendance, creates a sense of community and provides a venue for discussions. "As motivation, this is something new, at least in Ecuador," said Freddy Marín, FTDE's founder and director.

An important factor in FTDE's success is its willingness to listen to community concerns. When, for example, residents asked to meet where they lived instead of traveling to a distant location, FTDE helped promoters set up very basic community centers in homes, providing books and materials as requested. The NGO has also encouraged its beneficiaries' spirit of entrepreneurship. Dissatisfied with low prices paid by intermediaries, who then turned a high profit, farmers asked FTDE for assistance in selling on a larger scale to buyers higher up the distribution chain. They suggested a study of the market for their crops that would provide information on supply and demand, sales outlets and quality control practices. FTDE conducted the study and compiled the results in an easily readable guide. Known as the "Yellow Pages," it contains the names and contact information for major exporters of more than a dozen local products. FTDE staff and promoters also

Esmeraldas

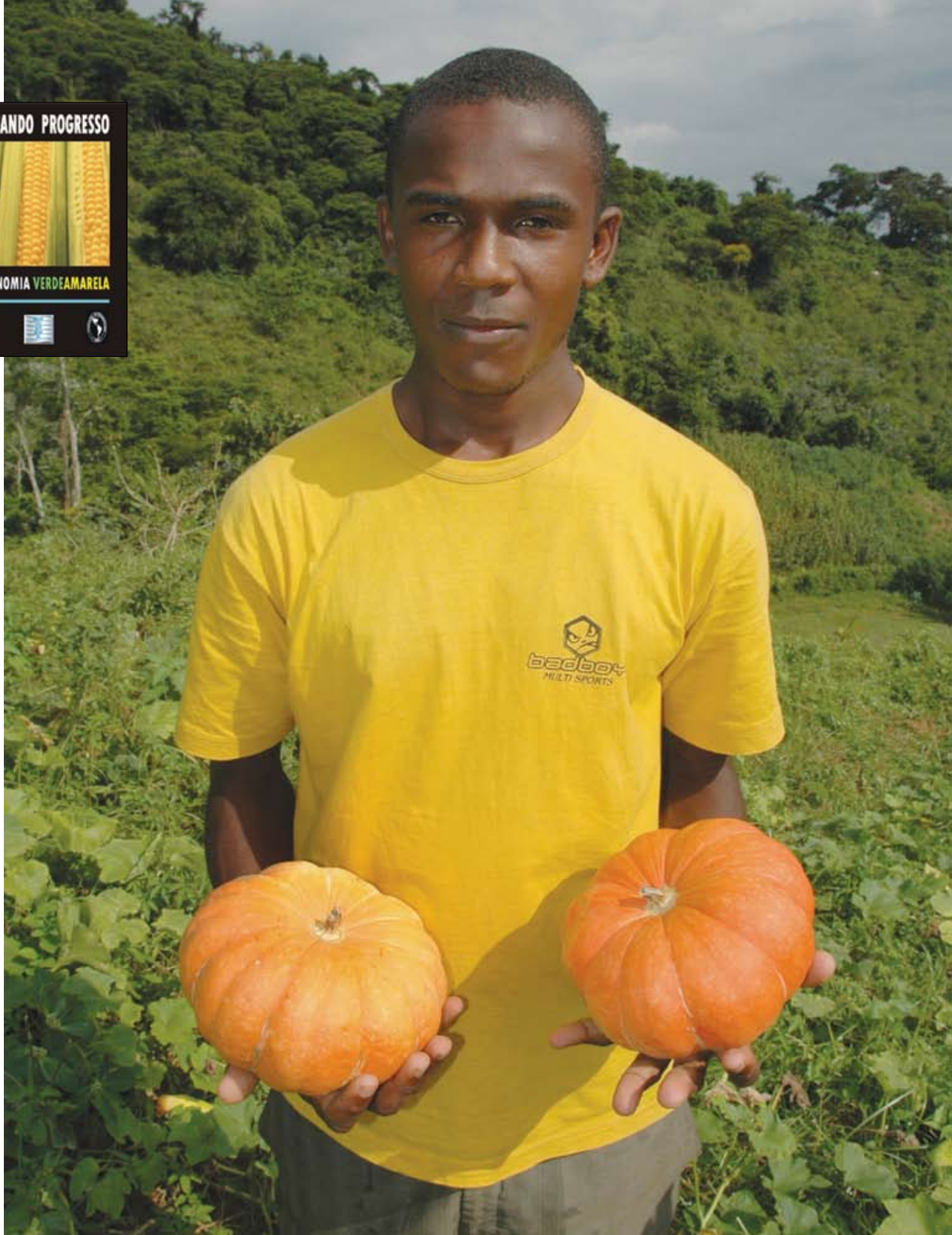
ECUADOR

provided farmers training in business negotiation techniques in preparation for one-on-one meetings with customers.

Farmers have since independently contacted exporters in Guayaquil and Manta, arranged to meet them, and negotiated transactions on mutually acceptable terms. Mister Santos and José Anchico, two early users of the guide, said the experience of leaving their communities to meet with a cacao exporter in Guayaquil led them to feel for the first time in their lives that they, not an intermediary, were in control of their own business. This kind of initiative goes a long way toward refuting negative stereotypes that have been an obstacle to development.

Project results have exceeded all expectations. Tangible results include improving the education levels of promoters and beneficiaries and increasing access to exporters, but perhaps the most important aspects are intangible. As Carmelita Cuzme, promoter of La Colorada community said, “Before the training, I was intimidated by the thought of going to the municipality and trying to talk to the officials there. But now, I know I can go in there and negotiate things.” In this way, the project has inspired individuals to work toward short- and long-term changes for themselves and their community. “It’s rewarding to give options to people who have been excluded for so long,” said Freddy Marin. He and his staff will continue to speak out against discrimination and to work with rural Esmeraldas communities to lay the groundwork for a better future.

Marnie Schilken is IAF's representative for Ecuador.



Santana's goal of "Green and Yellow Autonomy" depends on the outcome of a lawsuit over land title.

Land and Autonomy in Quilombo Santana

By Miriam Euclides Brandão

All photos by Sean Sprague

Santana, a community of African descendants who share a common history, heritage and territory, is one of about 25 *quilombola* communities in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It is located just 90 miles from the state capital, but its residents, like those of many other *quilombos* throughout Brazil, live in extreme poverty, marginalized from the local economy and society, and have scant access to health, education and other services commonly afforded Brazilian citizens.

Santana's 20 families, totaling 97 people, descend from freed slaves who remained on the Fazenda da Gramma after the death of their former owners. They had been promised the 828-hectare farm in exchange for their commitment to bury members of the owners' family as they passed away. The last of

the line, Maria Isabel de Carvalho, is buried with her husband in the farm's chapel, built by the slaves in 1867. According to Santana residents, she kept her family's promise and officially registered the conveyance before she died in 1903. Unfortunately, the relevant documents "disappeared" from the office with jurisdiction, and other farmers claim the land.

The nine-mile dirt road that links Santana to Quatis, the nearest town, was built in the mid-1980s. In rainy weather, only a four-wheel drive vehicle can navigate the last two miles into the community. The elementary school, inaugurated about 10 years ago, provides instruction only up to the fourth grade; older children have to walk two miles uphill to catch the bus that takes them to school in Quatis.



Miguel Francisco and Petra da Silva, right, worked with FIRJAN representative Ana Carolina Vieira on Santana's project.



Santana's new water system supplies households and fields at minimal cost. It is powered by the energy of a nearby river which turns the wheel and activates the pump without the pollution of diesel fuel. The system requires few parts from outside the community. Residents cultivate pumpkins, onions, squash and tomatoes in their gardens thanks to the abundance of free water.





Electricity also arrived 10 years ago, but it serves only those houses located near the school and the chapel and fails to reach about 30 percent of Santana's residents. Families live primarily from subsistence farming, seasonal employment in nearby farms and raising small animals. A couple of brick houses are currently under construction, but the rest are made of adobe and have dirt floors. Families cook on wood stoves; there is no treated or running water; out-houses are the norm.

But in 2004 a group of adults and youths, 21 people in all, learned to read and write through the federal government's program *Brasil Alfabetizado*, implemented in the state of Rio de Janeiro by the *Serviço Social da Indústria (SESI-RJ)*. The literacy courses exposed the community to the outside world, which encouraged the residents to seek help toward solving their greatest need: income-generation. Working with SESI-RJ, community residents, led by Miguel Francisco da Silva, the president of

their association and a tireless advocate for the community, developed an idea for a project. They were advised by the late Afro-Brazilian activist Osvaldo dos Santos Neves of former IAF grantee COLYMAR (*Circulo Olympio Marques*), and Ruth Pinheiro, his wife, who heads the *Centro de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (CAD)*, another former grantee that has worked almost 20 years in support of Afro-descendants. They called their project "Planting Progress—Green and Yellow Autonomy." The name encompasses Santana's primary goals, progress through planting (*semeando*) corn and autonomy for the community, and its patriotism, with the reference to Brazil's national colors. Osvaldo dos Santos Neves incorporated the words and the concepts in his design of the project's logotype.

The project received support from the Social Development Fund, co-financed since 2002 by the Inter-American Foundation and the Federation of Industries of Rio de

Janeiro (FIRJAN), whose Social Responsibility Office manages it. FIRJAN's goal is to increase corporate social investment in the state by bringing NGOs and industries into partnerships that promote income-generation, job creation and local development. To be considered for funding, projects must be submitted by a company in partnership with an NGO, and the company must provide at least 50 percent of the financing. The Fund's focus on partnerships with NGOs has created a lot of synergy among Rio's NGOs as well as in the business sector. Because of FIRJAN's success and its reputation for furthering corporate social responsibility, it has been invited to share its approach with similar industrial federations committed to promoting the ideal in the states of Piauí, Espírito Santo and Paraná.

Project activities in Santana focused on training for men in construction-sector skills such as carpentry, brick-laying, plumbing and electrical installation and on their production of corn, beans,



Elementary school students.

pumpkins, cassava and okra; on the production and sale of handicrafts fashioned by women from banana leaves; on sports and cultural activities for children and adolescents; and on health-care services for everyone. The community used project funds to build a warehouse and an office for its association and to purchase a flourmill and a water wheel for small-scale irrigation. Community members are also applying skills acquired through the project to rebuild and upgrade their homes, improve their diets and increase their income by selling excess production in the Quatis market.

Santana was the first *quilombola* community in the state of Rio de Janeiro to obtain support for a development project. The residents require a lot more investment in their community, but they must first fight to establish clear title to their land. Although Article 68 of Brazil's 1988 Constitution recognizes *quilombo* land claims and requires the Brazilian government to issue title documents to *quilombola* communities, few *quilombo* claims have been resolved

with finality in the past 19 years because the legal and regulatory framework is still inadequate. In 1999 the Santana community officially received title to its land, but legal challenges were immediately filed by the encroaching farmers, which has prevented the community from registering title as required.

Ownership of the land is clearly the highest priority for Santana residents as they cannot subsist from farming the four hectares of arable land now available to them, just 1 percent of the original *fazenda*, nor can they improve their socio-economic condition. While most of their energy is focused on this crucial struggle, they continue to seek partners willing to invest in their development.

Miriam E. Brandão is IAF representative for Brazil.



Photos: Courtesy PRODES

Portobelo, Panama: Tours, Crafts and Congos

By Paula Durbin



Sebastian Alot

PRODES director Inola Mapp.

Nestled between a jewel of a bay and lushly forested hills, Portobelo, on Panama's Caribbean coast, boasts a history as spectacular as its setting. Discovered and supposedly christened by Columbus, it reigned for a century as a major port, where gold from Peru and Mexican silver

were loaded into galleons bound for Seville. It was also the point of entry for human cargo from Africa, put up for sale, along with other imports, at the port's celebrated *ferias* for distribution throughout the Americas. Given its fabulous wealth, Portobelo was heavily fortified, although to little effect. Pirates and buccaneers marauded at will. Sir Francis Drake's remains, some say, lie offshore; Henry Morgan once held the whole town hostage.

By the 1700s, Portobelo's heyday as a commercial crossroads was over. "Impoverished" is how the guidebooks now describe the town whose main street is a lethargic stretch of modest buildings bracketed by ancient cannons and crumbling, moss-covered ramparts. But contemporary Portobelo

is still saturated with mystique, much of it deeply rooted in the heritage of its mostly "Afro-colonial" residents, whose ancestors passed centuries ago through the recently restored customs house. The designation distinguishes these coastal people from "Afro-Antillean" Panamanians, descendants of contract laborers who arrived from the West Indies, well after slavery had been abolished, to build the railroad and the Panama Canal. On October 21, when the town celebrates its Black Christ, a life-sized figure shrouded in legend and on display in the Iglesia de San Felipe, thousands of pilgrims from all over Panama trudge on foot, or crawl, to Portobelo for the African-flavored mass and parade.

Otherwise, the site has been surprisingly neglected as a tourist destination. "This district has resources," said Inola Mapp, executive director of former IAF grantee Centro de Estudio para el Desarrollo (PRODES), "but it has remained underdeveloped, possibly because of factors that impact negatively on residents' self-esteem."

Estimates of Panama's African descendants vary between 14 percent and 33 percent of the population. Historically, says Afro-Panamanian scholar Agatha Williams, all of them have struggled with prejudice, and until recently both their presence and their accomplishments were denied. There is no demographic information broken out on Panama's two distinct groups of African descendants, and they



"I was asked if I wanted to learn about my community, what happened to it and why these ruins are here," Antonio Olivero, 14, left, explained his participation in PRODES' program for guides to conduct tours of Portobelo after school and on weekends. "We were trained by people who knew all about this," said his partner Angel Algandona, 15.

are very different. The Canal workers labored under dangerous conditions, lived in disease-ridden barracks and were subjected to outrages that included unequal pay, according to Williams. But a steady job, a regular paycheck and fluency in English gave many a foothold on the ladder to upward mobility, something to which Afro-colonials could not aspire. Today the Canal workers' comparatively well-off children and grandchildren complain primarily of color-based discrimination that excludes them from white collar jobs. Rights groups have zeroed in on the practice of requiring a photo as part of an employment application and working to have it outlawed.

Inola Mapp grew up in Panama City, and hers is a prototype Afro-Antillean success story that puts the condition of Afro-colonials in sharp relief. Afro-Antilleans of the generation of Mapp's father, an upholsterer in the Canal Zone, insisted their children

grow up bilingual and even sent them to a nursery school where English became firmly engrained before the students started first grade. Fluency won Mapp a paid internship in the Canal Zone that helped support her toward a degree in economics from the University of Panama. As a well-paid government employee she was less inconvenienced by the country's 1988 financial crisis than most people, but the suffering around her changed her life. "I decided I had to help, thinking one day it could happen to me too," she recalled. So in 1989 she quit her job to found PRODES, a nongovernmental organization staffed by herself and a secretary.

For its first decade, PRODES' clients were drawn from Panama's indigenous and mestizo communities. "I hadn't focused on the difference between Panama's two groups of African descendants and how the Afro-colonials had been left behind," Mapp admits today. In 1999 she applied to the Inter-American Foundation for a grant for her project "Desarrollo turístico del municipio de Portobelo" aimed at greater participation by Portobelo's residents in an expanded tourist economy. The next six years were both tough and rewarding. A resounding success was the formation of a corps of enthusiastic teen-aged guides who earn pocket money conducting tours after school and on weekends. Beyond its practical aspects, the training broadened the students' horizon, exposing them to other cultural sites and to the University of Panama. PRODES also extended children between seven and 12 a program to encourage reading and creative writing. The result was a book distributed in the community and an invitation to the young authors to share their experience in a workshop at the national book fair in Panama City.

Portobelo's mayor had offered PRODES space in the municipal building for a library and his successor made good on the commitment. And PRODES drew on its ample experience with indigenous seamstresses when it helped organize and train Portobelo's artisans. But obtaining a locale for marketing the craftswomen's shell work, wood carvings and textiles almost turned into a bitter disappointment as did the project's loan fund. PRODES worked with



Language enrichment for elementary school students.



Crafts training.

The Congo season begins on January 20 with the raising of the Congo flag and ends on Ash Wednesday with the baptism of the devil who symbolizes evil or the Spaniards who perpetrated slavery.



Other Congo figures include the queen, her husband, la minina or the princess, and pajarito, the messenger, sentry and guide. The drama requires multiple drummers and three singers to lead the call and response.



Portobelo crafts.

the community to form a group to take ownership and manage the store built for the purpose by the Instituto Panameño de Turismo, only to see the group founder and the locale pass to a commercial tenant, then close down and remain empty. The microcredit program targeted development with loans to existing enterprises. Most of the year, however, they operated only on the weekends, and before long repayments were lagging. When IAF's funding ended in 2005, these problems still posed a daunting challenge, but eventually they were solved. Rather than give up, PRODES restructured the loans. And thanks to skillful networking, in August 2006 the artisans moved into a space offered by the local office of the Panamanian government's CEFATI (Centro de Facilidades Turística e Interpretación) in the restored 18th century building it occupies.

A vivid outcome of PRODES' activities is the renewed interest in Portobelo as the center of Panama's complex, colorful Congo tradition that, according to Panamanian artist and art historian Arturo Lindsay of Spellman College in Atlanta, originally emerged to express resistance to slavery and flourished in communities of *cimarrones*, or fugitive slaves. The Congo legacy was disappearing, and in

1999 Mapp and other interested groups decided to try to rescue it. Since then, every other year, the Festival of Congos and Devils has been staged by organizations that emerged from PRODES' IAF project. "Panamanian folklore had been reduced to *la pollera y el montuno*," Mapp said, referring to the national dress for women and for men. "But our IAF-funded project won the Congos nation-wide recognition. Today schoolchildren learn about them and folk programs include Congo dramas depicting episodes from Afro-colonial history."

Increasingly, visitors are attracted to the rituals. Lindsay agreed that this has been good for Portobelo's Afro-colonial residents and not just economically. "The city is full at Carnival," he said. "When someone takes a look at something you are doing and prizes it, you take a new look at your treasures." That is what Mapp wanted for Portobelo. "When human beings feel that their efforts are valued, they will promote changes that improve their quality of life," she said. 🌸

Afro-Paraguayans: Identity, Synergy, Census

By Paula Durbin

Who thinks of Paraguay as home to African descendants? A recent World-Bank financed study of the country's economic situation includes discussions of ethnic minorities ranging from the Mennonite community to citizens of Japanese ancestry, but neglects any reference to Afro-Paraguayans. The scant literature mentioning them at all invariably refers to their invisibility. Most Paraguayans would be surprised to know of the existence of communities of African descent in their midst, despite rousing displays of African-rooted dance, public celebrations of Saint Balthazar and undeniable historical references. Many African descendants themselves are unaware of their own heritage and origins.

Could this be about to change? Asociación Afro Paraguaya Kamba Cua (AAPKC), a group of African descendants that has always had a strong sense of identity, recently received an IAF grant to survey conditions in three Paraguayan communities of African descent. AAPKC is in Kamba Cua, a neighborhood located 15 miles from downtown Asunción where most residents descend from the slaves and free blacks serving under General José Artigas during Uruguay's struggle for independence from Spain. In the 1820s, these loyal troops and some family members followed Artigas into exile in Paraguay where the government gave them seeds, animals and 100 hectares of prime land to farm, which they and their descendants did for more than a century.

"In those times, my people lived well," said José Carlos Medina, who grew up in Kamba Cua and coordinates AAPKC's IAF-funded project. If almost everyone in this article is named Medina, it's because they are all family. The Paraguayan government conditioned the grant of the land on an order not to socialize with the local population, so Kamba Cua residents quickly became related by marriage. Eventually though, said José Carlos Medina, they



José Carlos Medina and Santiago Medina, his grandfather, at home in Kamba Cua.

had to find spouses outside their community so recent generations boast a mixed heritage. Like most Paraguayans, people in Kamba Cua navigate effortlessly between Spanish and Guaraní.

"We planted corn, manioc, sugar cane, tobacco, watermelons, chickpeas," recalled Eulalia Medina,

Paula Durbin

José Carlos' aunt. "Everyone had a plot." But no one in the community had clear title to the land under cultivation, and military dictators Higinio Morínigo, in the 1940s, and Alfredo Stroessner, in 1967, transferred most of it to the government or to private parties; the national medical school now sits on a portion. Eulalia Medina, who was 12 during the Stroessner regime's expropriation, vividly remembers the community's resistance when soldiers arrived to physically remove the residents. They were allowed to remain on the few hectares left to Kamba Cua, but their livelihood was gone. Like so many Paraguayan women, Eulalia Medina left for Buenos Aires to support her family by working as a maid. So did José Carlos Medina's mother whose sacrifices helped buy an attractive home and pay for her son's university education.

Kamba Cua residents have never accepted the loss of their land. After the fall of the Stroessner government in 1989, young people began to coalesce around the issue, and in 1999 they formed AAPKC. On Oct. 12, 1999, they coordinated a mass occupation of the area they considered their patrimony. The government responded with a show of force but turned over one and one-half hectares with—on Sept. 21, 2006—the all-important documents conveying title. That has raised hopes, and Kamba Cua is now suing for legal title to a larger area. "Without the land, our community will disappear," explained José Carlos Medina. Ask him about discrimination, and he immediately points to the expropriation, but he is also worried about racial profiling, the practice of requiring photos with job applications and race-based admission to places of entertainment. A long history of official indifference, he says, is confirmed by the lack of any data on the conditions of Afro-Paraguayans. "We only just got our street paved," he added. "We have less access, fewer opportunities."

AAPKC is headquartered in a two-room structure that community members added on to Kamba Cua's primary school with help from Germany's foreign aid agency and Aleya Horn, an African-American U.S. Peace Corps volunteer. The school itself was no more than a few years old, according to Horn. It had



Schoolchild in Emboscada, possibly home to the largest concentration of Afro-Paraguayans.

been built by the community, with municipal support, after AAPKC persuaded the municipality of the necessity for it. The education started from scratch, adding a grade each year. "My work was successful," said Horn, "because AAPKC was so organized. It had a mission."

That mission has broadened to embrace the promotion of racial equality, human rights and economic development for all African descendants, who rank with the indigenous peoples as the most impoverished Paraguayans, according to a report by Minority Rights Group International of the United Kingdom. But how do you enlist support from the very people who would benefit when they have so little sense of who they are? AAPKC has started by sharing traditions preserved in Kamba Cua, which its leaders hope will rally Afro-Paraguayans to their identity, a first step in organizing. Its star attraction is the Ballet Kamba Cua, some 60-dancers strong accompanied by musicians who beat seven distinctly Afro-Paraguan rhythms on drums crafted under the supervision of master drum maker Dionisio Medina. "Culture, identity, synergy," ballet director and Kamba Cua president Lázaro Medina described the plan.

Through Laurence Crockett, another African-American Peace Corps volunteer, AAPKC established



Lázaro Medina.



Claudio de la Cruz, 43 and the father of four, practices safety by wearing a mask in Emboscada's quarry and by not smoking.



Photos: Sebastian Alot

"Through Kamba Cua's drums we are getting to know about black slaves and that we are their descendants," said Silvia Galeano of Paraguari.

contact with a larger community of African descendants in Emboscada, a town some 36 kilometers from Asunción. Crockett, who now lives in New York, was quickly caught up in the enthusiasm of Patricio Zárate de la Cruz and other young Afro-Paraguayans eager to discover their roots. “They knew there was a history,” he said. “They just didn’t know where to begin. We started by interviewing older Emboscada residents and then went on to the archives.”

Everyone credits Crockett for the direction he gave this research into the slaves who had built a port on the river nearby. “We discovered that our community dates from 1740, much earlier than we had been told,” said Zárate, now coordinator of the group that organized to focus on this new-found identity. The group, which will work with AAPKC on the survey, has its headquarters on the grounds of Emboscada’s primary school and several teachers are involved in its activities.

The teachers and Zárate are among the few African descendants in Emboscada who have had access to higher education. For most African descendant men there, the only option is the cantera, or quarry, where the work is hard and dangerous and the pay is often poor. According to José Carlos Medina, and to a recent article in Asunción’s *ABC Digital*, many *pedreros* die before they are 40, from respiratory problems caused by inhaling thick dust as they smash the rocks into smaller pieces. The use of dynamite damages their hearing and causes serious, sometimes fatal accidents. Medina hopes that organizing the community will lead to safety regulations, requiring the use of masks and prohibiting smoking, and to better pay. “If the *pedreros* would form a cooperative and buy a car,” he added, “they would make four to five times their current income.”

AAPKC will also survey African descendants in Paraguari, about 60 kilometers from Asunción in the opposite direction, where Susana Arce, a teacher, heads Comisión Afro Americana Cambacaué. “We’ve been here 200 years,” she said of the community’s 50 families. “Our ancestors were slaves of the Jesuits. They built the government building and finished the church in 1862, just a few years before slavery



Susana Arce.

was abolished.” Arce is concerned that local Afro-Paraguayans don’t know about their African roots, or won’t acknowledge them, and she has high expectations of the survey. “Through the census,” she said, “we are going to know who we are—how many families we have in the community, how they earn their living and their work, how many children are not in school and how to address that.”

Work on the survey began in July 2006. In all three communities, residents finalized the questionnaire and learned to collect and process raw data on household composition, home ownership, housing conditions, employment, education, well-being, the use of health services, nutrition, income, and on migration, race and identity. The University of Asunción, Paraguay’s National Institute of Statistics and Organizaciones Mundo Afro of Uruguay have partnered with the communities. Horn sees the survey as vital. “One of my most upsetting experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer was listening to officials say that there was no such thing as an Afro-Paraguyan,” she said. “The data,” said José Carlos Medina, “will help Afro-Paraguayans begin a dialogue with the government on public policies and programs and on an ethnicity component in the national census. Accurate socio-economic information will be the basis for future development.”

For results of the survey, contact gboyer@iaf.gov.



Uruguay's Organizaciones Mundo Afro

By Paula Durbin

All photos by Sebastian Aloat

In 1996, Uruguay's National Institute of Statistics recorded the country's African descendants at 5.9 percent of the population. Today the figure stands at 9.1 percent, according to the Institute's ongoing household survey. The difference appears to be the consequence of a sea change in attitude. "The word 'African descendant' has definitely entered the Uruguayan vocabulary," said Alexander Silver who coordinates social policy for IAF grantee Organizaciones Mundo Afro.

The NGO doesn't claim credit for the willingness of more Afro-Uruguayans to self-identify as such. But given its approach to increasing its constituents' visibility and their participation in public life, there could well be a connection. An offshoot of the Asociación Cultural y Social del Uruguay (ACSU), Mundo Afro has evolved since 1988 from its improbable beginning as a magazine into a network recognized worldwide for its effectiveness—at the grassroots and with government at all levels—and its regional vision—borne out through the organization's Instituto Superior de Formación Afro (ISFA), a leadership training program that has reached 155 partners in 10 countries. Replication is a term freely

tossed about in development speak, but it takes on real meaning in light of Mundo Afro's new affiliates in Rivera and Artigas on Uruguay's border with Brazil. Since 2000, the organization has intensified its outreach to African descendants in Asunción, Paraguay, and Santa Fe, Argentina.

ISFA coordinator Orlando Rivero calls himself "an encyclopedia" on the form discrimination takes in his country. "African descendants comprise 9.1 percent of the Uruguayan population but 90 percent of the poor and only 0.01 percent of university enrollments, about 100 out of a total student population of 60,000," he said. "They are barely represented in the professions or the trades. The requirement of submitting a photo with job applications limits their chances for white collar or other employment requiring contact with the public. We want more information on their incarceration rate, but we already know that most Afro-Uruguayan defendants cannot afford a lawyer."

The exhibit *Afro-Uruguayos y su historia* on display at Mundo Afro's Montevideo headquarters, is, Rivero insists, "a remedy for gaps in an educational curriculum that barely mentions the African pres-



Mundo Afro's Montevideo staff: Back row from left, Miguel Pereira, Jeannine Vera, Alicia García, Luisa Casalet, Mario Silva; front row, Alexander Silver Correa, Orlando Rivero.



Juan Pedro Machado.

ence in Uruguay." To date, more than 20,000 school children have visited it. There they learned of the arrival in Montevideo in 1608 of "30 piezas," or pieces, of African cargo. Although colonial

Uruguay was not a plantation economy, by 1808 it had 40,000 blacks. They worked with leather and *charque*, jerky exported to feed slaves in other countries, and as laundresses and other domestics, jobs they still hold. In 1842, Uruguay abolished slavery and became a haven for Brazilian fugitives. Today its African descendants are concentrated in Montevideo and along the Brazilian border.

Among Mundo Afro's 20 charter members was Romero Rodríguez, whom President Tabaré Vázquez appointed as one of his advisors in 2006. According to his wife, Luisa Casalet, Mundo Afro's program coordinator, Rodríguez belongs to the generation formed by the idealism of the 1960s. Since founding Mundo Afro, Rodríguez and others have developed strategies calculated for maximum impact, both

symbolic and substantive. In 1992, Mundo Afro capitalized on preparations for the Quincentenary of *el Día de la Raza* by scheduling a counter-celebration of "the last day of freedom" on October 11. Some 10,000 people showed up for the parade, now an annual event. Then Mundo Afro's leaders decided to begin a dialogue with the municipality of Montevideo, representing 50 percent of Uruguay's population and a significant chunk of the country's budget for social services. A result was a 20-year loan of space for Mundo Afro's headquarters.

In 1999 Mundo Afro confronted Uruguayan diplomats at a session of the United Nations Committee to End Racial Discrimination in Geneva. Ironically, this led to the development of its strongest ally within the Uruguayan government, the elite Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To counter the official version of race relations in Uruguay, which omitted the African descendent component, Rodríguez and Juan Pedro Machado showed up with their own "shadow report" and offered themselves as examples. The U.N. committee's recommendations to the Uruguayan government included the desegregation of statistical data by race, and the government has complied.

"La mama vieja" by artist Mary Porto Casas, below.

"That connected us with the Institute of Statistics," Machado said, "which had always had an excuse not to include race and ethnicity in its surveys. Now the budget for the 2010 national census allows for their incorporation." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs included Mundo Afro in the delegation to the 2001 *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* in Durban, and the NGO has since figured prominently in subsequent exchanges.



Mundo Afro, its staff emphasizes, is nonpartisan. During the presidential campaign of 2004, Mundo Afro's goal was to negotiate "insertions" in the new administration. Results included a post for Machado in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the appointment of 13 other Afro-Uruguayans to ministerial positions, including to the new Secretariat for African Descendent Women created within the Ministry of Social Development at Mundo Afro's insistence. The officials meet regularly on priorities such as budgets, affirmative action and a government entity working on behalf of African descendants. Mundo Afro has identified concerns to be addressed within each ministry; HIV/AIDS and sickle-cell anemia, for example, top the list for the Ministry of Public Health. "We try to determine the best way to connect with the ministry and go with a package," Machado said. "The Ministry of the Economy is the government's hard drive, but every ministry has been approached."

It all adds up to "a qualitative change politically," Casalet said. "Mundo Afro went from working with civil society to working with government." She pointed to Alicia García who recently moved into a refurbished 36-unit apartment building, thanks to Mundo Afro's negotiations in 1998 with the Uruguayan government, which financed the upgrade of a building donated by the city of Montevideo. The future occupants contributed their time and labor to



the effort. The new homes, said Machado, are a first step toward compensating the 500 families, most headed by single women, displaced in the 1970s from *conventillos*, or tenements, when Uruguay's military government declared the housing substandard, destroyed the buildings and trucked the residents to abandoned warehouses and factories where conditions were far worse.

García works for Mundo Afro with the Sindicato de Empleados Domésticos Afrodescendientes (SEDA) representing the 42 percent of Afro-Uruguayan women in domestic service. Most earn what the employer wants to pay, she said, regardless of wages and hours laws, and this issue is part of the "package" directed to the Ministry of Labor. A dancer, she is also involved in Mundo Afro programs in the African-rooted *candombe* tradition celebrated between December and March. Sponsored by the *Fédération Regales de Musiciens Français*, she and virtuoso drum-

mer Sergio Ortuño, whose *comparsa*, or marching band, leads Montevideo's annual Carnival parade, were among a group that recently toured schools and music centers in France. Back home, they give lecture demonstrations on *candombe* in local schools.

"The drum is our principal tool, the symbol of the black community in Uruguay," explained Miguel Pereira, Mundo Afro's director. "It is the legacy of the slaves and represents their community and resistance. Drum making results in workplace cooperation, cultural identity and group cohesion." Pereira hopes the children taught by master craftsman Juan Carlos Rodríguez in Mundo Afro's workshops will make not only their own drums but others to market in Uruguay and abroad.

Artist Mary Porto Casas coordinates the crafts cooperative housed at Mundo Afro's Montevideo site. With its IAF award, Mundo Afro has trained women to recycle trash into jewelry, post cards, oil paintings, candles and other items they sell at craft fairs. Now they want to start micro-enterprises and market their goods to the passengers from cruise ships docked at Montevideo. Crafts leading to micro-enterprise development are key to Mundo Afro's grassroots work with its affiliates and in Paraguay where training in drum making for 20 Afro-Paraguayan youths catalyzed the outreach of Afro Paraguaya Kamba Cua (AAPKC) to Emboscada and Paraguarí. "This is positive work, a commitment transformed into action," said Pereira. "We need to strengthen African descendant movements everywhere as a means of going forward."



Milton Gómez and María del Carmen Saldivia perform *candombe* for Rivera schoolchildren.

Beyond Montevideo

Mundo Afro Rivera

Rivera, a seven-hour bus trip from Montevideo, like the duty-free zone around it, straddles Uruguay and Brazil. Heading Mundo Afro's program on the Uruguayan side is Adán Parreño, a 26-year veteran of the police force who attributes his activism to the disparate treatment he has experienced since childhood. "I knew there had to be others concerned about this," he said. On his desk was a recent newspaper clipping that recalled an incident involving the legendary Afro-Uruguayan singer Lágrima Ríos, "tango's black pearl" and Mundo Afro's honorary president. When the delegation she was part of visited a Uruguayan embassy in Europe, Ríos was asked to use the service entrance.

Parreño instituted a sports program, *Driblando la Violencia*, consisting of three months of training and

games for 200 youths between 12 and 18 who might otherwise succumb to truancy and drugs. Most come from households headed by single mothers. Some live in the street to avoid the violence in their homes or barrios. “No institution wants to work in this area,” said Parreño. The final event in the program is an awards celebration financed by local businesses with prizes donated by the municipality. “The ideal would be to offer this program year-round,” he said.

Mundo Afro Rivera also sponsors a *candombe* school, where students learn to craft drums and to play them using the local technique. Now Rivera has a *comparsa* and dancers. “Its sound is very well developed; people think we have more drums than we do,” Parreño offered. When *Grassroots Development* visited, the *comparsa* demonstrated a music tradition dating from slavery at Escuela Santa Isabel. Dancing the role of the young, baton-twirling *escobero* was Fabián Borges. María del Carmen Saldivia was the *mama vieja*, who banishes bad spirits, and Milton Gómez her partner, the *gramillero*, representing the favorite slave, decked out in the master’s finery. “We wanted to live our heritage as African descendants; all we needed was someone to teach us,” Gómez said.



Enilda Cruz Martins.

“Since taking Mundo Afro’s course two years ago, I’ve danced the *gramillero*.”

To Adán Parreño providing exposure to this tradition is important. He hopes Mundo Afro Rivera can become self-supporting by giving tourists in the duty-free zone an opportunity to experience Afro-Uruguayan ethnicity, an idea he has shared with the Ministry of Tourism. “We are constantly dealing with the authorities, following the example of Montevideo,” he said.

Centro Cultural Zumbi dos Palmares

A few blocks away, Enilda Cruz Martins, a teacher, leads the Centro Cultural Zumbi dos Palmares, named for the legendary *quilombo* that flourished for decades in the Brazilian northeast before the authorities captured the residents or forced them to flee. “I want my black people to have a better place in this country,” she said, referring to Brazil. “I’ve been an activist for 30 years,” said Cruz Martins. “I come from a family of 17 children. My mother was a cook and I was her helper. I first experienced discrimination at age 10 in the church where I volunteered. One day, the priest told me to go away because white people with money were expected and they didn’t want to see a little black girl cleaning.” Today, she noted, her bishop is black.

Reared in the Afro-Brazilian culture, Cruz Martins fashions traditional African remedies using plants from her lush garden. Palmares has worked with Mundo Afro since 1994 and the relationship has intensified since 2003 through Mundo Afro’s IAF-funded training in micro-enterprise development and work in gender, health and education. In addition to its efforts to keep children off the streets, Palmares helps single mothers develop a source of income through classes in computer skills, recycling bottles and newspapers into crafts, and ceramics. Mundo Afro’s IAF grant will fund publication of Cruz Martins’ book on the history and culture of Afro-Brazilians.



Mónica Gómez and Luisa Casalet with Artigas officials.

Mundo Afro Artigas

An initial contact with Adán Parreño, an awareness program in the schools and a march on Oct. 11, 2004, that attracted 5,000 people, led to the founding of Mundo Afro in Artigas.

Early on, the affiliate impressed the entire town by organizing a seminar that drew not only support from Uruguay's Ministry of the Interior but the minister's participation. "No one thought he would come, and it attracted attention" said Mónica Gómez, local coordinator. During the most recent mayoral campaign, Mundo Afro Artigas invited all candidates to a meeting; each promised to work with the organization. Julio Silveira, the winner, made good on his commitment which included the five-year, renewable loan of La Casona, an attractive house belonging to the municipality and located in its well maintained park, and opportunities for Mundo Afro to train city employees and the police. "He's at all our events, or his representative," said Gómez of the mayor. "This is a small town. We see him every day."

"These are people from our community, whom we know and trust," clarified city official Blas Abel Mello. "They contribute to our society, culturally and by addressing a social need in a low-income area. Mundo Afro's objectives coincide with our objectives." Abel was referring to Mundo Afro's programs for young people who learn drum making,



Mundo Afro's Mónica Gómez and Gustavo García outside La Casona.

with the goal of selling the drums in Artigas' duty-free shops, and capoeira. Classes in the Afro-Brazilian martial art, offered by *mestre cabeza* Jorge Barrientos who teaches the moves accompanied by drumming, lyrics and music on the birimbau, attract 30 students, many considered at risk. "A means of self-defense and a form of expression that develops self-confidence and self-discipline," Barrientos called the training.

Grassroots Development was present when Gómez spoke to the municipal officials about Mundo Afro's work with 30 women artisans, mostly single mothers living from government subsidies, who are learning to weave tapestries. Gómez's niece, María del

Rosario Ferreira, a graduate of the excellent craft institute developed in Artigas by the European Union, teaches them in shifts of eight in a neighbor's home, while their children play outside or are under foot. "Three times a week they study textiles and twice a week reading and writing," said Ferreira, who initially paid for supplies herself. "Now they can all write their names.

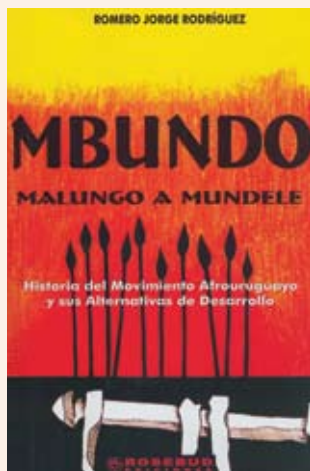
They are always on time and never absent." Before Gómez left city hall, the officials had offered a space for the artisans' first exhibit. 🌸



María del Rosario Ferreira.



Artisans in training.



Mbundo Malungo a Munde: Historia del Movimiento Afrouuguayo y sus Alternativas de Desarrollo

By Romero Jorge Rodríguez

*Rosebud Ediciones:
Montevideo, 2006*

Available in Spanish

This book by Romero Jorge Rodríguez tells the complex, intriguing story of Afro-Uruguayans since their ancestors' arrival in Montevideo in 1608. Organized in brief chapters, it is an excellent reference on specific events and offers an encyclopedic view of the Afro-Uruguayan experience. Black sociopolitical movements, magazines, educational institutions and cultural traditions are all presented in this publication, shedding light on many unsung leaders and their important role in their community.

A very brief analysis of African history frames the broader discussion. Rodríguez approaches his material as a passionate scholar of Afro-Uruguayan history and an active participant in its more contemporary episodes. Despite this direct involvement, he presents a balanced perspective, at times critical of the internal Afro-Uruguayan struggles with class that gave rise, for example, to the distinctions in the black community between status as a respectable *negro usted* and as a decidedly unfortunate *negro che*, raised recently in an Argentine documentary. [ED. See the article by Miriam Gomes on page 66.]

Although the book is full of historical and cultural references, the bulk of the text focuses on Afro-Uruguayan political movements. According to Rodríguez, these began in 1872 with the Movimiento Negro Uruguayo, which was followed by several waves of political candidacies and the founding of the Casa de la Raza, a cultural center focusing on the important contributions of African descendents in Uruguay. In

the late 1940s the Circulo de Intelectuales Artistas y Periodistas Negros (CIAPEN) emerged to promote the Afro-Uruguayan media and cultural expression. Several of these structures have disappeared, but they were key during their time to consolidating the notion of an Afro-Uruguayan identity and served as the foundation of many significant policy advances achieved in recent years.

The last chapters of the book are devoted to the contemporary situation of Afro-Uruguayans including the founding of Mundo Afro in 1989, which exposed socio-economic gaps and discrimination in Uruguay to an international audience. The process of documenting socio-economic inequalities in the country has made a tremendous contribution to developing policy to address these disparities, and has led to rising interest in Afro-Uruguayan history and culture. Appendices include more details on policy advances, race and achievement in the educational system, and specific community programs. Although author Romero Rodríguez was, and still is, often at the center of the action, he downplays his own significant role and attributes the accomplishments to contemporary civil society groups as well as a long history of Afro-Uruguayan activism which started centuries ago. —*Judith Morrison, IAF regional director for South America and the Caribbean*



Romero Jorge Rodríguez

Courtesy Inter-American Dialogue



Rosemarie Morelen

Costa Rica's Epsy Campbell: Devoted to Change

By Darío Elías

Epsy Campbell

A double dose of exclusion, as a woman and as an African descendant, frames Epsy Campbell's lifetime of work for human rights. An economist by profession, a politician by vocation and the mother of two girls, Campbell is also a former member of Costa Rica's Chamber of Deputies. To appreciate that last accomplishment, consider the odds. "I am one of the very few African descendent women who are inside the power structure in Latin America," Campbell said. "Out of 4,200 legislators, there are only 11 female deputies and senators and fewer than 70 black deputies, men and women."

Campbell's pursuit of equality began when she, as a child, questioned the gender-based assignment of household chores and responsibilities among her siblings. As a young activist she had little interest in running for elective office, which she considered too confrontational and personally demanding. But in the new Citizen Action Party, she saw the opportunity for a new forum, one that welcomed her. "I got into politics determined to make changes and convinced that they were possible," she said. According to Campbell, her party subscribes to the *nueva política*. This means, she explained, "gender equality in all decision-making bodies; all election ballots include both men and women; environmental protection is part of the structural agenda; campaign promises are prohibited; and we may not waste public goods of any kind."

Her welcome, she discovered, extended beyond the party. "I had always thought Costa Rica was a racist society in which a woman like me had no place," Campbell said, "but the country has surprised me. Politicians and the academic elite sometimes have many more prejudices than the ordinary people." Her incursion into politics catapulted her into her party's chairmanship and into the Chamber of Deputies where she distinguished herself as "best woman legislator," according to her peers and public

opinion polls. In 2006, she came close to becoming Costa Rica's vice president, losing by the slimmest of margins. She could rest on these laurels but she insists that her struggle isn't over and there's a big job ahead.

"History has forgotten that the worst holocaust ever witnessed by humankind was the transatlantic trafficking in Africans," she said. "Millions treated like animals, stripped of absolutely everything, but who, drawing strength from I don't know where, played a part in their own liberation, and were freed 200 years later." The inequalities persist, she added. "In many places, being born black is being born poor with near certainty of going to jail instead of finishing school. It was only in 2000 that the Conference of the Americas against Racism and Racial Discrimination in Santiago, Chile, recognized that there are 150 million of us and that most are totally excluded. At that conference we got commitments from government. It was all the result of decades of an immense effort fighting for the civil and human rights of African descendants."

For Campbell, the year 2000 was pivotal. She began a five-year effort coordinating the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Women's Network, linking more than 200 organizations whose goal was to put Afro-descendent women on the international agenda. That same year, the Alliance of Afro-Descendent Leaders of the Americas emerged in Costa Rica, she recalled, and in 2003, black congressional representatives from the region began work on the Black Parliament of the Americas which brought them all together in 2005. Campbell claims this triggered other initiatives to coordinate black legislators from the hemisphere. A common concern is the staggering lack of birth certificates among indigenous citizens and African descendants. "Boys and girls who are not legally registered at birth do not have a legal identity. They are denied all the rights enjoyed by citi-

zens. So in the Black Parliament of the Americas, the registration of births is a basic demand.”

Campbell said gains in the fight for equality might be consolidated and built upon if those in power coordinate with the grassroots on an agenda of inclusion. “I believe,” she explained, “that if we talk about a change in the politics of the 21st century, it is that the grassroots can no longer be isolated from the political establishment. Grassroots organizations have to become a priority for the political parties. The new dynamic demands a dialogue—a structured, institutionalized dialogue. Decision-makers must be brought together with representatives of grassroots organizations to set priorities. Who knows the community needs better? There are organizations that are part of the community and work every day as interlocutors. Agenda-building happens with ordinary people in the community, who are working on the problems of schools, health care, employment, production, hunger.” Campbell still believes in political parties, which she calls “par excellence, the forums for gaining political power.” Nonetheless she insisted, over and over, that the issues of grassroots organizations and social movements are where the agenda is and their representatives can set it without going through parties. An additional benefit of this approach, Campbell said, would be the elimination of patronage favoring a privileged few.

Corporate social responsibility has a role in Campbell’s vision of a more equitable and egalitarian future. “The business leaders of the 21st century understand that their own priorities must involve the inclusion of the have-nots,” she said. “Unequal societies are not sustainable over time in Latin America. We cannot go on concentrating wealth in the hands of a few and making others live by the law of the jungle. Giving a place to someone who must have a place is also the only way to eradicate the galloping corruption we have in the Latin American countries. I see that as the substantive political change.”

It all comes back to the grassroots, she seems to imply. “If grassroots organizations and leaders do not assume responsibility or implement the mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and efficiency demanded by the citizens, we are really not building democracy.”

Asked about her principal contributions, Campbell skipped any mention of formulas, methodologies or tangible components of her activism. “I think that my contribution is the type of leadership I encourage,” she answered. This has to do not only with reason, but with the heart. When I fight for others, I do it because I have a heart that is pained by seeing the people who have nothing. I think that is where my qualitative contribution lies. When I say I’m an economist by profession it’s only to say that I have a tool for contributing in terms of content, but I also have a social commitment to a collective agenda. One could be better off with an individual agenda, but I choose a collective agenda. One cannot bring about change without other people. My life must be devoted to social change. I also believe that my contribution is to bring to this process much happiness, many gains, much optimism and motivation.”

Campbell became emotional when she related a message from a Peruvian woman who said that she had heard her interviewed and had been inspired. “Inspiring someone is an amazing thing,” she said. “I have been inspired by many people, but I never aspired to inspire anyone. I think many people are surprised that a black woman, who appears to be much younger than she is, can do so many things, with confidence, without asking permission, without intending to harm anyone, but with the total conviction that we must move forward. I think that my contribution has to do with my passion, with never being satisfied. The day I rest from this struggle for inclusion will be the day I die. I will use all the drive that’s in me, taking along my daughters, my family, the people who love me, and picking up more people along the way because this cannot be done alone. And I think that that’s a contribution as well, understanding that you are not alone. There are people everywhere, and we have to become a team so that, in 50 years, we can look back and say, “How good that we did what we were responsible for doing!”

Darío Elías, a practicing journalist, manages all translations for the IAF.

A Path through the Woods: 15 Years of Community Forest Management in Mexico

By David Bray

As I enjoyed breakfast in the shadowed, early morning leafiness of Oaxaca's famously charming Zócalo, the town plaza, I had no clue that Sergio Madrid and Fernando Melo were about to change my professional life. Sergio and Fernando, Oaxacan NGO leaders, were briefing me on their work with forest communities in the Sierra Norte, whose deeply corrugated wooded slopes loomed abruptly just north of the city. I was just starting as the IAF representative in Mexico, after three years in the Southern Cone—where I had made surprisingly good use of my anthropology Ph.D. in funding rural and indigenous cooperatives in Paraguay and elsewhere. But I knew little about forests

or community forestry. As Sergio and Fernando talked, I began to dimly understand what was going on up in those hills. Fifteen years later, my understanding can still be pretty dim, but not for lack of trying.

After breakfast we headed into the elevated chill of the Sierra's pine and oak forests, to tour a series of indigenous Zapotec villages. We first visited a small community with the outsized name of San Mateo Capulálpam de Méndez, which would eventually gain an outsized reputation for good forest management. Sergio had been working with Capulálpam for 10 years, first as a student advising rebellious forest communities mobilizing against government-



Mark Calcedo

Community logging operation in Quintana Roo.

awarded logging concessions on their lands and later as co-founder, with fellow student activist Francisco Chapela, of Estudios Rurales y Asesoría (ERA), one of Mexico's first forest NGOs. ERA had also worked with several other indigenous communities along the same road, as well as with the more distant Chinantec village of Santiago Comaltepec, toward the rain-soaked cloud forests of the eastern Sierra Juárez.

As little as I knew about community forestry, somehow I knew enough to be astonished by what I saw. These communities were really organized. Their leaders walked with a confident step, logging on lands owned by all legal residents of the community, under carefully drawn management plans that conformed to Mexican forestry laws, and running community businesses, vertically integrated from tree stump to sawmill and furniture workshop. As an anthropologist, I had read about how small farmers in Latin America were being economically and culturally pulverized by forces beyond their control, their brief flashes of defiance usually followed by ennobling defeat. These communities weren't like that at all. Coming down from these forest communities might have fallen short of descending a personal road to Damascus, but I was nonetheless seized by a new vision for the IAF portfolio and my own professional interests.

Starting with Sergio and then consulting networks of our grantees in Mexico, I began asking questions about these communities that seemed to be doing quite extraordinary things. This was the late 1980s, and media attention to tropical deforestation was peaking. Chico Mendes, the Brazilian union leader turned environmental hero, had been assassinated in 1988, and the "burning of the Amazon" blazed into headlines. Forest communities worldwide were depicted as engaged in desperate acts of resistance to logging or driven by poverty to destroy their own resource base. But there were no accounts of communities that were slowly and painfully making major progress toward integrating conservation and development in forests that they owned. One big question was, "Are there more of these communities in Mexico or is this just happening in Oaxaca?" The

answer from multiple voices was, "It's happening in Quintana Roo, in Guerrero, in Michoacán, Durango, all over Mexico."

Fascinated, I visited more communities. I discovered to my amazement that there was almost nothing published in Spanish or English on community forest management in Mexico. I began filling filing cabinets with "gray literature": internal reports, technical documents, unpublished manuscripts and newspaper accounts. With my IAF supervisors' approval articulated in annual strategy documents, I started stocking the portfolio with projects in community forestry.

Why?

I also began to conduct interviews with community leaders, frequently while bumping along rutted logging roads deep in the forest, and pieced together some of the history and current struggles in the sector. My article, "The Struggle for the Forest: Conservation and Development in the Sierra Juárez," appeared in *Grassroots Development* in 1991, the first published article on the subject in English or Spanish, as I confirmed after 15 years of bibliographic ransacking. It was followed by a steady stream of master's theses, Ph.D. dissertations and academic works by a variety of Mexican and U.S. scholars. This wave of interest was recently capped by the publication of *The Community Forests of Mexico* (University of Texas Press: 2005), edited by colleagues and myself, an invitation to Beijing to brief Chinese officials on Mexican community forestry in September 2006, and a presentation at the World Bank last November.

What exactly is so significant about Mexican community forestry that attracts global attention? In a nutshell, this: Most forests in the developing world are owned by governments, 98 percent of those in India, for example. This means that forest communities do not have legal rights to products from forests they have inhabited for millennia. They are shut out entirely or confined to scavenging for low-value, non-timber products and are in constant battle with forest wardens and bureaucracies. Corrupt governments pocket most of the value of the forests. Deforestation,



A resident of Corales, Guerrero, measures the volume of logs harvested for market.

poverty and social conflict are the result. To justify this grim reality, it is usually held that local communities do not have the ability to manage forests, certainly not in connection with a complex industrial operation like timber production. But in Mexico, thanks to the Mexican Revolution of 1911-1918, a large percentage of forested territory was given to communities, almost as an afterthought, as an attachment to agricultural lands. Mexican communities struggled to gain effective control of their forests, since the government, under the constitution, still claimed the right to award logging concessions, leaving communities with only a stumpage fee that was squirreled away in difficult-to-access government accounts. But through a combination of activism and sympathetic forest bureaucrats in the 1970s, Mexican communities began to show that despite poverty and low educational levels, their residents could learn to produce and market timber, generate income, and, as later confirmed, stop deforestation.

My 1991 article focused on an enduring theme in the debate over the fate of forests in the developing world: Can forests be logged and preserved at the same time? Or does any use, beyond scientific

research and controlled recreation, lead to degradation because humans just cannot be trusted? In that case, only strictly protecting “parks” or cores of “biosphere reserves” saves forests and their biodiversity. But what if it is possible to cut down trees, advance human welfare and maintain biodiversity and other environmental values? To find a path through the woods of this debate, I focused my 1991 article on the Chinantec community of Santiago Comaltepec and the emergence of an inter-community organization, the Unión Zapoteca-Chinanteca (UZACHI).

A path in the woods

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Santiago Comaltepec was an obscure battleground in the war between conservation and development over land use. Outside advisors were trying to get Comaltepec to cooperate in the creation of a biosphere reserve with its species-rich cloud forests, which could sharply limit extractive activities. ERA, on the other hand, supported logging the pine forests of Comaltepec to feed a community sawmill under government-approved plans. Community debates over reserves and logging got caught up in municipal

politics, and when the article appeared in April 1991, the sawmill had just reopened after a year's closure due to the conflicts. The article mentions the 1989 founding of UZACHI, composed of four Zapotec and the one Chinantec community. By August 1990, in an event that would mark the maturing of the communities' human capital, Jesús Hernández, a new graduate forester who had grown up working on forest brigades in Xiacuí, one of those communities, would become the first indigenous person appointed forest director, a key technical position in charge of forest management.

Since 1991, I have moved on, and so has Mexican community forestry. I left the IAF in 1997 to restart my academic career as chair of the department of environmental studies at Florida International University in Miami. By 1999-2000, I had secured funding from the Hewlett Foundation and the Ford Foundation for a series of research projects on Mexican community forestry. Additionally, a new generation of researchers, some inspired by the 1991 article, had begun to pursue the subject more systematically. Meanwhile, the debate over how to save the world's forests became more heated without shedding much light, and I decided to begin testing what I called, the "community forestry hypothesis." Advocates of community forestry had been arguing for years that devolving control of forests to communities that depended on them for their livelihoods was the best way to prevent deforestation. Park advocates mostly insisted on what anthropologist Dan Brockington calls a "fortress conservation" model of keeping local people out, while fitfully trying to compensate with frequently ill-conceived "integrated conservation and development projects" that tried to encourage small-scale environmentally-friendly projects on the park boundaries. Until the last few years, most of the research focus has been arguing for the effectiveness of parks. However, recent studies of community management of timber, an area where Mexico is hands-down the global leader, provide firm grounding for the community forestry hypothesis. At the same time, a new generation of leadership is emerging from the communities themselves, assuring

the sustainability of the sector in Mexico, and first-generation NGO and community leaders now hold influential positions in government and civil society.

A little history

While on leave from the IAF in 1993–1994, I took advantage of a Fulbright grant to study forest policy in Oaxaca and learn how such a large and significant sector had emerged in Mexico. As noted, the Mexican Revolution resulted in the distribution, in fits and starts, of major chunks of private and public land to small farmers. As the century advanced, almost accidentally during this process, forests were also distributed via collective land grants known as ejidos or, if given pursuant to indigenous claims, comunidades. However, the Mexican constitution allowed the government to continue to claim rights of usufruct. So particularly between 1940 and 1976, Mexico, like many developing countries, awarded logging concessions to private and parastatal companies, leaving communities only the stumpage fee referred to earlier.

The Mexican Revolution, however, had created a compelling alternative vision of communities with not only agricultural lands but their own forests to manage. By the 1960s and 70s, communities began to protest their lack of control over their forests, and sympathetic university-trained foresters began to infiltrate the ranks of the government's Forestry Under-Secretariat. From 1974 to 1986, these reformers joined with communities mobilized against the concessions in favor of developing their own forest enterprises. Community members formed logging teams, negotiated with buyers and learned how to operate a timber industry. Ironically, the communities where concessions had operated advanced the fastest because they were experienced in industrial logging and frequently had the best and most accessible forests.

The financial benefits of direct community control over logging quickly surfaced. Timber is a commodity with a ready market paying good prices. Better organized communities were quickly able to capitalize themselves, and, with the prof-

its from the first year or two of operations, were able to vertically integrate, buying the specialized equipment that can pull massive logs out of the forest into the rotary blades of sawmills and on to the final consumer. Some would go further up the value-added, vertically integrated chain, drying the wood to improve its quality, setting up workshops to turn out furniture and moldings, and even developing plywood factories.

Ensnared back in academia in 1997, with grant money to recruit other scholars, I joined forces with outstanding Mexican researchers such as Alejandro Velásquez, an expert on remote sensing and land use change; his then-student Elvira Durán; Juan Manuel Torres Rojo, one of Mexico's leading forest economists; and anthropologist Leticia Merino, as well as Camille Antinori of the University of California at Berkeley. We started asking new questions about Mexican community forestry. How many logging communities were there in Mexico? Were they profitable? Were they preserving forests? Can community forestry alleviate poverty? And what exactly is a community forestry enterprise anyway?

A forest of new data

We were initially told that 700 communities were estimated to hold permits to log in Mexico, but that no one knew the exact figure. Most of the data were on file with state-level delegations of the federal environmental agency and with forest engineers responsible for the logging plans. A research team interviewed most of the engineers in federal offices in the 10 most important states—a mammoth task—and collected basic information from other sources. We discovered that the figure was more than three times the original estimate; around 2,400 communities throughout Mexico had been logging as of 2002.

Although frustratingly incomplete, the data offer a glimpse into the magnitude and characteristics of Mexican community forestry. They have allowed us to classify the communities according to their degree of vertical integration toward selling their timber as a more finished product. Not surprisingly, fewer than 10 percent of the communities that could be classi-

fied had sawmills, since this requires high levels of organization and capital. But just over 20 percent had extractive equipment, which allows them to add value to their timber. Most of the rest sold on the stump or were not classifiable. There is apparently a high correlation between forest size and vertical integration; communities with sawmills have on average three times the forest area of the others. The smaller the forest with respect to the community's population, the less likely vertical integration becomes.

Beyond an initial mapping of the world's largest community forest sector managed for timber production, we have made important strides toward understanding the impact of community forestry on poverty alleviation, reduction of deforestation and even sharply diminishing rural violence. Most recent research on economic development, tropical forests and poverty alleviation has been discouraging. For nearly two decades, researchers have been swarming in buzzing clouds over the latest strategy that would offer enough of an incentive to keep people from clearing forests to graze cattle: non-timber forest products, ecotourism and, now, payment for environmental services. Timber still yields the highest value, but, worldwide, most interested communities cannot access it. In Mexico communities had access, and some appeared to be quite safely out of poverty, but there were no numbers to back that up.

A first modest step in this direction comes from FIU colleague Rick Tardanico and my study of six forest communities in the tropical state of Quintana Roo. What we found, after our trained Mayan-speaking team interviewed members of 200 households, was surprising. We had hypothesized that communities harvesting high volumes of mahogany would not be poor, and indeed, we found that one mestizo community logging in high-volume was relatively prosperous, especially for rural Mexico. A second community, harvesting two-thirds of the mahogany volume of the first, should also have enjoyed relative prosperity but was mired in poverty. What was the difference? Most obviously, the first community had a sawmill, and sawn wood commands double the price of logs. Other factors, including high rates

of monolingualism in Mayan, lower adult participation in the wage-labor force, distance from main roads and larger family size, also conspired to keep the second community poor. Caobas, another community, also mestizo and with a sawmill, was almost officially out of poverty, despite its low volume of mahogany, and was using its income to spin off other forest-related businesses, such as carpentry shops, suggesting that well-being can improve even when forestry resources are more limited. We thus concluded that community forest management can alleviate poverty, but only if other conditions exist.

Turning to the question of whether community forest management reduces deforestation, the answer seems counterintuitive to the many ecologists who associate any form of logging with destruction of the forest. However, most communities in Mexico log selectively, under government-approved plans, so disturbance of the ecosystem is relatively low. A first study found that a region of central Quintana Roo dominated by community-managed forests had the lowest recorded rate of deforestation of any region of tropical southeastern Mexico over the last several decades, a period during which much of lowland tropical forests were devastated by agricultural colonization. Further, a search of the literature showed that the deforestation rates were lower than in regions dominated by protected areas such as biosphere reserves, suggesting that community forestry may protect forests as well or better than establishing protected areas. A next study, by Elvira Durán and colleagues, looked at specific forest communities in central Quintana Roo and temperate-zone forest communities in the Pacific coast state of Guerrero and found similarly low rates of deforestation compared to a national sample of protected areas.

Intrigued by these findings, we attempted a more rigorous comparison focused on the “Maya Forest,” extending through southern Mexico, Guatemala’s Petén and into Belize. The vast Maya Biosphere Reserve in the northern Petén, a complex of some 10 parks and 12 “community forest concessions,” contained both land-tenure regimes that we wanted to study, and the community concessions presented

an especially compelling contrast to Mexico’s communities. Many of Mexico’s forest communities had been settled for decades, even centuries, making for historical advantages as they begin to develop forest enterprises, and most large-scale tropical colonization in Mexico had ended by the early 1990s. The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, in southern Campeche state, had been declared in 1989 superimposed over parts of existing ejidos, but was also under relatively low pressure from colonization by the 1990s. The situation in the Petén in the 1990s, by contrast, was chaotic as intense colonization pressures threatened growing communities of farmers within the protected areas and other parts of the biosphere reserve. With significant support from international donors, the Guatemalan government, almost in desperation, tried a large-scale experiment with grants of 25-year logging concessions to communities instead of to industry. Most of these communities were formed by recently arrived colonists, normally not a promising setting for an undertaking that requires high degrees of organization.

But given the enormous incentive of access to high-value timber, the Guatemalan communities have responded by organizing themselves, to varying degrees and in their own disorderly fashion, to administer a forest enterprise and carry out a management plan. Throwing all this into the analytical mix, we set out to compare biosphere reserves and community forest regions in Mexico, which had little pressure from colonization, with the areas in Guatemala representing a high-pressure situation. On one level, our findings, still in draft, are as hypothesized. In Mexico, both Calakmul and the forest communities exhibit very low rates of deforestation; in the Petén, we found that some protected park areas are fast falling under the homesteader’s axe. But the situation was different in the concessions, where communities of similar demographic composition to those in the park have been given rights to all the products of the forest as well as technical and organizational assistance in logging. These communities find more value in the standing forest than they do in the soil underneath and most want to pro-

tect their economic base, resulting in relatively little deforestation.

But as usual, things are not that simple. Some remote, uninhabited parks in the Maya Biosphere Reserve also show very low deforestation rates, and a few inhabited concessions can approach the deforestation rates in the worst of the parks. This suggests no single “magic bullet” form of land use, sustainable use or protection will always work in every case and that those concerned with tropical forests need to be much more flexible in their approaches. And here another factor has to be taken into account, one we hope to turn some researchers loose on. Thus far, we have been focusing on the impacts on forest cover, but what about benefits to poor communities? We have seen that logging lifted some in Quintana Roo out of poverty. A study in the Petén showed that households in the community forest concessions have incomes nearly three times the norm for the region. The only benefit that parks, as currently administered there, provide is access to their soil—not quite the idea of a park—and some parks are being devastated to get at the soil. But the community logging concessions practice conservation, with some of the caveats noted above.

Thus, a new wave of research is unraveling some of the complexities of community forest management in Mexico and beyond. It suggests that this strategy can work if certain conditions are met. But as scholars advance knowledge on community forest management for timber, a new generation of community leaders is pushing the boundaries of community forest enterprise potential, even as the older generation assumes prominent roles in civil society and government.

New leaders and fresh visions

Sergio Madrid, who first took me into Mexico’s forest communities, has for the last 12 years directed the Mexican Civil Council for Sustainable Forestry, a Mexico City nongovernmental organization which represents a coalition of forest-based NGOs from throughout the country. In the often fractious world of NGOs, Sergio has been able to hold this coali-

tion together and has played an important role in many recent policy debates. His colleague from ERA, Francisco Chapela, has for several years been the director of the Biodiversity Conservation Project for Indigenous Communities, a World Bank-funded effort to identify and inventory sustainable uses for biodiversity. Jesús Hernández, identified earlier as the first UZACHI forest director, whose photo appears with my 1991 article, held that position from 1990 to 1998, when communities began their ongoing advance. Today he works for the Program for Forest Conservation and Management (PROCYMAF), in Oaxaca, which is also funded by the World Bank and the Mexican government.

Reflecting on UZACHI’s history, Hernández notes that its relationship with the ERA to some degree serves as a model for the kind of support PROCYMAF is trying to provide. “We felt there was a synergy,” he said. “Before, you had isolated communities with their different projects, and if there’s no follow-up, they get lost. The relationship between ERA and UZACHI was an interesting model, and that’s really what we try to do now.” In 1991, as noted, Comaltepec was a troubled community, and it would be shaken by violence in the mid-1990s, but today everything is peaceful, the sawmill is operating, and the community is pushing out the frontiers of community forest conservation. Eusebio Roldán Félix, a native of another Chinantec community in the Sierra Norte who advises Comaltepec as UZACHI forest technical director, recently noted that Comaltepec has declared thousands of acres protected and is receiving payment from the federal government for services protecting the watershed.

A study mentioned earlier referred to the state of Guerrero. There, one of the best-managed communities is El Balcón, literally the balcony, a reference to its commanding position astraddle the thickly forested ridge top of the Sierra Madre. El Balcón went through an initial chaotic period in the 1980s, with the near collapse of a community business despite the herculean efforts of the first generation of community leaders to take on the daunting task of running one. Eventually, an honest professional



Jesús Hernández, UZACHI's first indigenous forest director.

manager was brought in. He saved the businesses, established good relations with the community, and was succeeded by another professional. Then, in 2004, a remarkable transition took place. During the years of professional leadership, the community of El Balcón decided to invest some of their profits in its own human capital, providing full fellowships for bright young people to finish high school and pursue university studies. The investment has paid off, and now these university graduates in their 20s and early 30s fill all of the top positions in El Balcón's enterprise.

I recently met with this leadership in their offices at their processing complex, a sawmill that has been called the most sophisticated in Mexico, with drying ovens imported from Portugal, located in the sweltering Pacific coast town of Tecpán de Galeana, down the mountain from El Balcón. "I have my degree in economics, and now I am an advisor to the ejido," said Álvaro Atanacio López, whose high school and undergraduate education the community enterprise supported and who is about to receive his MBA. "In previous years the leadership included people who weren't community members, but now, through our community's

educational project, we are distributed through all areas. The director general, Francisco González López, is a young professional; assistant director Gildardo Atanacio López is a community member and a lawyer. The head of human resources, Paulino Atanacio López, is also a young university graduate. Our ejido is our people." That the same last names keep popping up is a reflection of the fact that El Balcón is basically one large extended family. And the family now has bigger visions. Atanacio López mentioned the plan to build a furniture factory and, pursuant to a signed agreement with the state government, schoolchildren in Guerrero are going to be sitting at desks made from timber certified as sustainably harvested.

A light in the gloom?

Elsewhere, the news from the tropics has been gloomy. Ecologist Deborah Clark of the University of Missouri-St. Louis recently said the Amazon ecosystem is "headed in a terrible direction." But the future looks bright for at least some of Mexico's community-managed forests and our experience suggests that the model might present an alternative to two extreme approaches: strictly protected areas, on one hand, and turning thick stands of trees into pastures, on the other. Not all Mexican forest communities are doing as well as Santiago Comaltepec and El Balcón, but more than a few are, which shows that the potential unleashed by access to timber can result in education, sustainable livelihoods and forests teeming with wildlife. A rising generation of MBA-trained professionals from the communities is taking the enterprises to another level. And I am continuing on the same path that Sergio Madrid and that first visit to Capulálpam pushed me onto 15 years ago, working to understand how the sector has come so far so fast and how other communities in Mexico and elsewhere can achieve the same results.

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Development and Heritage in Cusco, Peru

By Patrick Breslin



All photos by Patrick Breslin

Economic development is not always about learning new skills and techniques. Sometimes it comes most dramatically from the rediscovery of an ancient way of working. Throughout the Andes, where one of the world's richest weaving cultures flourished for centuries, a craft that went into decline in recent decades is being revitalized. The programs the IAF has funded since the 1970s include some of the pioneering attempts to restore this textile heritage and contemporary efforts as well.

Many factors undercut the Andean weaving tradition: the introduction of synthetic yarn and dyes; mass produced clothing and other textiles; the intrusion of the modern world, via television; economic pressures that pushed or pulled people from mountain communities to big cities. Ironically, even the popularity of the weavings

created a problem. Backpacking tourists bought up so many in some communities that there were few models left to inspire fledgling weavers.

In Peru in 1996, Nilda Callañaupa founded the Center of Traditional Textiles of Cusco (CTTC), an IAF grantee since 2003, to promote Andean weaving and to generate more income for weaving communities. CTTC experts work with local weavers to help them recover traditional techniques and to raise the esthetic quality of the weavings. That has

enabled the organization to market the finished products as art and to command higher prices both in Peru and abroad.

A good part of CTTC's marketing is through its museum and shop in the city of Cusco, just a short walk from the central plaza. As the ancient Inca capital and the jumping off point for trips to Machu



Yarn is spun from sheep, llama, and alpaca fibers. Dyes are made from plants and insects, including the cochineal that lives in cacti and is ground up to produce vibrant purples and reds.



Antonia Callañaupa works with one of the vegetable dyes used in the Chinchero weavings. The pots behind her are for boiling dyes.

Yenny Quillahuaman Huarhua captures the colors of the earth, sky and tiled roofs in her work displayed under a hot sun in Chinchero, a town the Incas called the “birth-place of the rainbow.”



Traditional techniques, such as sorting the colored threads, contribute to the esthetic quality.



Left to right, Guadalupe Alvarez, Fidelia Callañaupa and Engacia Quispe in the courtyard of the CTTC center in Chinchero. Weavings can take up to 30 days to finish, and families prize them as objects of material wealth.



Lucio Illa Condori, one of many men weavers, guides the shuttle on his loom in the Chahuaytiri center.

Picchu, Cusco is one of the busiest tourist attractions in South America. That guarantees a steady flow of potential customers who can watch weavers at work and educate themselves on styles and techniques and on the central role the craft plays in Andean culture. The center also provides space for training programs in traditional weaving as well as in leadership and management. Other sales channels include the organization's Web site, in English and Spanish, and international trade fairs and exhibitions. Nilda Callañaupa often lectures on Andean weaving in the United States.

CTTC programs now cover about 350 weavers, both men and women, in nine Andean communities, each with its own design tradition. They work with wool from sheep as well as llamas and alpacas, some of it from their own animals, some purchased. Weaving is a communal activity, with



Marketing for many crafts is through CTTC's museum and shop in Cusco. CTTC markets weavings as art to command higher prices in Cusco and beyond.

the weavers coming together each day at their community center. Sometimes buyers show up there, but most of the production is shipped to Cusco once a month and sold through the CTTC center. The increased income—in many cases, the weavers have become the principal earners for their households—is having an impact on education. "The money is for our children," one woman weaver in Chahuaytiri said. "Agriculture prices are low, but with the income from weaving, we can buy clothing for our children, and they can study beyond the few primary grades available here. Now we can send them to a high school, something we couldn't afford before." ❀

Remembering the IAF: Lessons in Value

By Deborah Szekely

It may sound strange, but my years as president of the Inter-American Foundation, from 1984 to 1991, were, for me, a formative experience. I was young—only 60!—and adventurous. Eager to learn, fascinated by new responsibility, I was excited by the prospect of having the staff and money to change peoples' lives. With great delight, I saw that IAF assisted very poor people in climbing the ladder toward a more decent life and really helped grassroots democracy take hold. It soon became clear to me that the IAF approach could work at home. When I left the IAF, I was determined to apply to my own country the important lessons that the IAF had learned during 20 years of wisely investing millions in U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Bringing the IAF back home

In 1940 my husband Edmond and I originated the concept of the modern spa; “making healthy people healthier” was Rancho La Puerta’s motto. When my son graduated from Cornell and returned to take over our business, I found myself redundant and I retired. I had already spent one lifetime as a business entrepreneur, and retirement to me meant change, a new career and new beginnings. Since I had complained a lot about Washington, I decided to go there to put my skills to good use. My first job was at the United States Information Agency where I found a good fit thanks to the experience I had gained as a community volunteer. Redesigning and reducing 18 advisory committees to 11 was comparatively easy. While there to my great good fortune, I learned that the IAF was looking for a new president. My business skills in the U.S. and Mexico, my Spanish and knowledge of Latin America tipped the scales in my favor. Becoming IAF’s CEO propelled me into social entrepreneurship.

I took to heart the lessons I learned with IAF’s partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, and

with this knowledge I began two experiments: Eureka Communities in 1991 and, 10 years later, the New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center. Eureka drew on IAF’s practice of funding travel grants so proponents visit and learn from groups already doing similar projects. For 15 years, Eureka offered peer-to-peer coaching programs to leaders of nongovernmental organizations in Los Angeles, Boston, Detroit, San Francisco, San Diego and other cities. We asked these community CEOs what they wanted to learn. Hundreds from throughout the United States responded that they wanted to observe and participate in organizations that excelled in the activities they wanted to do. Through two-week “sabbatical travel grants” reinforced by monthly peer meetings, we gave them a chance to see the future and explore the best ways to get there. They visited and quizzed other decision-makers. They had loads of questions—on fundraising, working with boards, reaching out to youths in gangs, training people for better jobs. Eureka, much like the IAF, created networks and support systems so that lessons from development and urban anti-poverty projects might be shared more broadly. Our clients’ success, growth and sustainability proved we were on the right track.

The IAF has been both spur and companion for the five-year-old New American Immigration Museum and Learning Center in San Diego. It offers programs to welcome newcomers and help them contribute to the constant work-in-progress of these United States. It also helps the native-born to appreciate the courage, resourcefulness and contributions of immigrants. The impassioned current debate about immigration naively neglects the newcomers’ economic inputs into our society, the benefits of cultural diversity and the import of remittances to their home countries. More than the native-born, immigrants know that the preferable long-term solution to poverty would be jobs, oppor-



Deborah Szekely, IAF president 1984–1991.

tunity and a promising future for their kids back at home—without traumatizing or breaking up families through risky and painful journeys to distant lands.

IAF's splendid *Grassroots Development* of 2006, with its focus on transnational development, tells the stories of hometown associations and investment in grassroots development by yesterday's migrants. The IAF has been involved in cross-border initiatives since the 1980s. *Grassroots Development* reminded us of the Arizona farm workers' project which invested the contributions by citrus workers and ranchers in economic development projects improving the lives of migrant farmers in the Sierra Gorda highlands of

central Mexico. For some, that meant abandoning the migrant circuit and staying home. It is one of many experiments that show the creativity of people torn between push factors like desperate need and pull factors of better jobs.

I suspect the Museum's 2003 conference on remittances reinforced IAF's focus on this process. More than three years ago, the Museum, thanks to Gaspar Salgado, brought together in San Diego leaders of hometown organizations along with scholars and representatives of international development agencies (including IAF's David Valenzuela and Jill Wheeler and Donald Terry of the Inter-American Development

“I have been deeply impressed by the organizational ingenuity of grassroots groups that have taught people how to work together for peaceful solutions and more civil societies.”

Bank) to explore the potential of remittances in accelerating sustainable development. The volume to the region last year exceeded \$45 billion—not small change. Now everyone, from transfer companies to investment and development banks are watching these flows, each seeking a piece of the action.

Eureka and the Museum may be my brain-children, but they have the IAF’s DNA. I helped launch them, inspired by the way IAF helped people south of the border, and I staffed them with people drawn from the IAF. There have been many cross-border exchanges. So the IAF’s responsive, “people to people” grassroots foreign aid approach has spun off efforts to mend the U.S. social fabric.

Impact abroad

Congressmen Dante Fascell and Brad Morse sponsored the legislation that created the Inter-American Foundation in 1969. They recognized a need and sketched farsighted goals: “to strengthen the bonds of friendship and understanding among the peoples of the hemisphere,” “to support self-help,” to stimulate “wider participation and the growth of democratic institutions.” Those lovely words initiated not rhetorical but very real and lasting relationships which, the IAF, like the Peace Corps, has managed to keep alive at all levels of society, but especially at the grassroots.

Let me defend my convictions about IAF’s impact in the region.

The IAF helps create grassroots democracy and better living conditions. I have been deeply impressed by the organizational ingenuity of grassroots groups that have taught people how to work together for peaceful solutions and more civil societies. Their energy is bottom-up, their organizations, positioned in the middle, give their energy direction and their networks provide clout with those at

the top. To the degree that survival needs are met, educational opportunities are open and decent jobs available, poverty can be overcome.

Through sustained, responsive development, IAF creates value for the U.S., at home and abroad. My private-sector experience made me a firm believer in value creation. And I learned that, like business innovation, sustainable development is a long, uphill climb, but IAF has helped it happen. Mention a country and I’ll tell you of groups I visited, of cups of tea or coffee we drank and dreams that we shared. Projects throughout Latin America and the Caribbean surprised and delighted me for their innovative, sustained, and tangible benefits. “Our pay goes straight to our children’s bellies,” said a Jamaican woman wearing a hard hat who was caught on one of our videos at work on a women’s construction project. I remember a half dozen fishermen in Costa Rica who lived in the most primitive circumstances, squatting in mud huts on a contaminated river delta, bereft of everything but children. Boat rent and ice purchases reduced their take-home pay to only a quarter of what their catch was worth. An IAF grant enabled them to build their own boats, obtain motors and, a year later, buy an ice machine. Later, they opened a store selling basic necessities and then they formed a cooperative, bought a sonar-equipped boat and a refrigerated truck, and sold fresh fish to restaurants in San José.

In Honduras, a group that depended on making and selling charcoal to middlemen recognized that their profits were slim and their region would soon be deforested. They received IAF funds to buy a truck so that they could sell their charcoal door to door in the streets of Tegucigalpa. They went on to build a schoolhouse and they convinced the government to provide a teacher. I remember too visiting the

impenetrable scrub in the Chaco of Argentina where campesinos survived by raising goats. Their dream was to grow cotton, a skill they had learned as field laborers. With their grant, they bought a tractor. They sought and obtained government land grants, cleared their parcels, took good care of the tractor and raised the stubborn crop. They had the dream and did the work. Our funds helped to trigger a process of authentic development, not charity, to help them climb the ladder.

The IAF teaches us to stay open to eureka's and surprises from friends. At the IAF, I used to put 15 percent of our annual allocation in my president's slush fund, as some called it, which was used exclusively for bright ideas, out-of-the-ordinary requests and, sometimes, off-the-wall ventures that elicited from me and the staff a hearty "Eureka!" I recall too struggling organizations like FINCA and ACCION. They received seed grants for their affiliates and later became major players in the field of micro-credit. ASHOKA and SYNERGOS were valued partners in stimulating social entrepreneurs. I believe in development that recognizes the value of coming together, organizing for better lives, building the trust and networks now known as human and social capital. Such investment is beyond value, because the more it is used, the more its value increases. Similarly, I believe there is no security without close, reliable friends surrounding us. That too is real value!

My IAF tour

In Washington, I spent a great deal of time with Congressman Fascell. He taught me IAF's history and inculcated in me his enthusiasm and his own and the U.S. Congress' founding vision of "friendship among peoples throughout the hemisphere." Not all Latin Americans were ready to believe in friendship with a U.S. government agency, but IAF, by building a solid track record of excellent work, slowly earned credibility in the 1970s under the inspired leadership of its first president, Bill Dyal. Ideology trumped many friendships during the turmoil of the 1980s. Many worried about IAF, about its future, its autonomy under a new administration that requested the

resignation of IAF president Peter Bell. I was sworn in and I too navigated some rocky seas with my board and faced conflicts in the region. On my watch, Latin Americans, with good reason, questioned military operations in Honduras and Nicaragua, and Washington seemed obsessed with real or imagined threats from the south, including duly elected leaders. But strong support for IAF came from many quarters and we were able to continue moving forward. Our board and staff decided we must pursue our mission and follow our grant-making criteria, making known who we were funding and what they were doing. Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, even the National Security Council were in full agreement with our grassroots focus.

Some of the staff, given the ideological climate, hunkered down with a sort of siege mentality, preferring a low profile. But I wanted the IAF to come out of its shell. I was convinced that IAF was a jewel and that my primary mission as president would be to heighten its visibility in the U.S. and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Transparency seemed to me the best approach. "Here's who we are," I wanted to say. "Here's what we do. Have a look." My business background does incline me to do marketing and good marketing builds on facts, not hype, and on the delivery of sound products, not hot air. Slowly the staff agreed. I've always believed in staying in touch with my friends, and I strongly concurred with the Congressional mandate to "make friends in the hemisphere." Transparency and constancy seemed the best way to make and keep friends.

Rather than fear that U.S. ambassadors would impinge on our autonomy, we offered them detailed briefings before they left for their assignments. We visited them on a regular basis, informing them and host government representatives on our projects. As they came to know us better, they left us alone, fully respecting our autonomy. Thanks to my own good fortune, I could spend a chunk of my salary on networking events. We held breakfasts with public- and private-sector development leaders in Washington, not only for visibility but to share information and better coordinate our efforts. It seemed to me that our

“I saw the impact of small amounts of government money invested in the right place, at the right time, for the right purpose.”

grantees were frequently isolated, uncommunicative or competitive, so too I often hosted gatherings overseas for their representatives. Networks spread, spider-web style. Later we set up support teams of in-country contractors who could backstop grantees, communicate with them, quickly provide emergency funds and help us monitor programs and facilitate learning.

We had a wonderful time coming out in the fresh air, rather than lying low. We multiplied publications, even printing four issues of *Grassroots Development* one year. We started a splendid book series including volumes summarizing IAF work with its partners in Colombia and Uruguay. We greatly expanded our Fellowship Program supporting research by graduate students from Latin America, the Caribbean and the U.S. (I'm delighted to learn that IAF is reactivating the Fellowship Program. Some of the finest researchers in the Americas were produced with IAF grants). From this research as well as from studies of civil society and urban government collaboration throughout the region, we compiled volumes published in English, Spanish and Portuguese. We produced award-winning videos on IAF projects in Mexico, Honduras, Jamaica and Peru, making them available to schools and television networks. We were on the map.

Looking back, I realize the value of my years in our nation's capital. The person who writes this is far different from the one who left San Diego. I saw how much good government can do. I learned to appreciate the dedication of the average civil servant committed to greater purpose: a better world for all. I saw the impact of small amounts of government money invested in the right place, at the right time, for the right purpose. I saw that business skills are not only transferable to government, but are very much needed. Proof of this is that the Congressional

management manual, *Setting Course*, which I conceived in my first year in Washington, is now in its tenth revised edition, keeping today's new members of the House and Senate from reinventing wheels.

To understand government, to forgive government, to improve government, you need to become a partner. I would hope that people thinking of a career change seriously consider taking their skills to Washington, D.C. Like me, they will find that this will be the most fulfilling, satisfying career of all. The adjustment was challenging. There were many sleepless nights, and days were always fascinating, exciting and never, ever boring. The new friends I made are as committed today as they were then to bringing change to all levels of society. We view the thinking people of the world as each doing his or her own thing, but all working toward the same goals: a healthy planet and people free to pursue happiness.

I'm aware of only some of the many good things that have happened in succeeding years. The IAF emphasis on social investment partnerships continues its spirit of innovation and outreach. Social Progress Trust Funds have supplemented the IAF budget during some very austere years. New and supportive boards have been named and they too “caught the bug” of enthusiasm. The IAF has an eminently qualified and marvelous human being in its president, Ambassador Larry L. Palmer. My fervent hope during this period when the Americas have been neglected due to wars and rumors of wars, to fears and rumors of fears, is that we will realize that our best friends are also our neighbors and that a hemisphere full of friends is the best guarantee of security we'll ever find. If we do, the Inter-American Foundation will loom as one of the best investments the United States government has ever made. ☀

Patrick Breslin



Quispe at Harvard

Rosario Andrada de Quispe, founder of IAF grantee Warmi Sayajsunqo and an indigenous Coya, was a featured speaker at Harvard University's *International Bridge Builders Conference* held Feb. 28. Her subject was the microfinance model Warmi has successfully used to improve conditions for Coya communities in northwestern Argentina. Sharing the platform with Quispe was Mary Kondo of Zimbabwe who transformed her country's Mt. Darwin District by training women to diversify crops and then to process them.

Quispe, pictured above in Abra Pampa, founded Warmi with eight other Coya women in 1995. With its 2001 IAF award, the group expanded its microcredit and enterprise development program by launching more than 20 community banks, an information system to manage the credit program and ventures as diverse as a cyber-café and a gas station. The banks currently extend micro loans to 3,000 families.

Coverage of Quispe at Harvard in the major Buenos Aires daily *Clarín* detailed her beginnings as a 19-year-old activist concerned with the link between the local mining industry and the high incidence of cancer of the uterus among Coya women. Anthropologist Agustina Roca, of Warmi, quoted in the prestigious newspaper *La Nación*, said the organization "has placed indigenous issues on the public agenda."—Gabriela Boyer, IAF representative for Argentina

U.N. Disabilities Victory

After eight rounds of grueling negotiations, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the text for the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities on Dec. 13, 2006. It is hoped that the Convention will eliminate discrimination against the disabled by requiring U.N. member states around the world to conform their legal codes to its standards. What is certain is that the process leading to approval energized the disabilities movement.

As reported in *Grassroots Development* 2004 and 2006, Oscar Ruiz, now a law student in Puerto Rico, and I represented the IAF at the Convention negotiations in 2003, and I attended the last two rounds in 2006. That 2003 round laid the groundwork for the final version of the Convention, as 25 representatives of seemingly disorganized factions coalesced into the International Disability Caucus (IDC). It grew to represent more than 70 organizations and networks. While civil society organizations could not vote during the negotiations, they could express their concerns, and through the IDC, groups representing the world's disabled spoke with one voice. "Nothing about us, without us," the IDC's slogan, articulated

Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías



Activist Rosa Salgado Álvarez advised Nicaragua's delegation to the 2006 negotiating session on the U.N. Convention on Disabilities.

the aspiration for a treaty that included them from draft to implementation. Ironically, marginalization became an asset. Protocol dictated that civil society representatives sit apart from U.N. delegates, but lack of accessible areas made this impossible. Forced to share their space, diplomats became exposed to the activists' challenges as well as their capabilities. Collegial working relationships developed.

To address participation from developing nations, the Inter-American Institute for Disabilities, in coordination with Handicap International, launched Proyecto Sur, an association of representatives of disabled people's organizations working within the IDC. The IAF provided grants for 30 Latin Americans to attend the final two rounds of negotiations and Proyecto Sur brought six activists from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The activists often worked until midnight to ensure a Convention they desired. They participated in the committees debating drafts, occasionally spoke on behalf of the IDC, hosted an event to present their work and lobbied delegations, including for language recognizing the double discrimination suffered by indigenous people with disabilities.

On March 31, 2007, the Convention was officially signed by 81 states and the European Commission. It is now being considered for the ratification required for recognition as international law. Demanding enforcement is the next struggle.—*Eduardo Rodríguez-Frías, IAF operations staff assistant*

SEM Women Advance

Salvadorans en el Mundo (SEM), a U.S.-based organization whose mission is to develop and promote a common agenda for hundreds of Salvadoran groups in the U.S., set a new standard for the inclusion of women in its events when it held its fourth convention in San Salvador in late November 2006. "We don't just want to be an ornament: we want to influence the organization and assist poor women," said Coney Rodríguez, chair of SEM's women's advisory committee, Comité Consultativa de Mujeres, which, in helping plan the convention, had assured the participation of women on all panels. Her com-



Kathryn Smith Pyle

Salvadoran women at the SEM conference.

mittee had also organized one of the convention's most popular panels, on the challenges posed by gender in transnational development issues.

President Antonio Saca and other Salvadoran officials attended the convention's opening event, and U.S. Ambassador Douglas Barclay welcomed the 500 participants, 200 of whom had traveled from the U.S. They represented a broad array of development-minded organizations including cultural groups, educational institutions and hometown associations (HTAs) that support small-scale infrastructure projects and provide humanitarian assistance in crises.

Among them were 16 Salvadoran women from Boston, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Memphis, Long Island, Las Vegas and various cities in Florida, whose attendance was funded by the IAF. Although from diverse backgrounds and age groups, all of these travel grantees were interested in improving the status of Salvadoran women in the U.S. and in El Salvador. One represented a hometown association formed 25 years ago by 30 women now in their 80s and 90s, who last year raised \$11,000 to fund projects in El Salvador.

SEM's three earlier conventions, held in Los Angeles, Washington and Boston, respectively, were each attended by up to 20 women whose participation had been funded by the IAF. Women are key to HTA fundraising efforts, and their participation at the four conventions was part of a strategy to encourage them to advance to leadership positions

in their organizations. Travel grantees take advantage of workshops and opportunities to network, which some credit with their assumption of greater responsibility in HTAs. SEM itself recently elected a woman as its president: Merlin Peña.

Rosemary Vargas-Landaus, policy coordinator of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), was so impressed with the commitment of women attending the 2005 Boston convention that she encouraged them to participate as a group in IFAD's program in El Salvador. The group has since submitted a proposal, bolstered by HTA counterpart, to support women's economic projects in one of the poorest Salvadoran regions. In addition to moving forward with the proposal, Rodríguez says the next steps include reaching out to Salvadoran women in other countries and to indigenous women in El Salvador and developing a college scholarship program for women.—*Kathryn Smith Pyle, former senior IAF representative for El Salvador*

Crime Prevention

Young people under 25 make up 60 percent of the population of Central America. Unfortunately, many have been cast adrift by a history of out-migration and civil war and a lack of educational and employment opportunities. Gangs promise a sense of belonging and often a career in the underworld.

Gang membership is now estimated at more than 100,000 and many violent crimes are attributed to these juveniles. The official response in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala has been a policy of *mano dura*, or iron-fist, that relies on preemptive arrests of suspected gang members and harsh prison sentences.

But the 25 experts speaking at *La Violencia Juvenil en la Región: un diálogo pendiente*, an October 2006 conference sponsored in San Salvador by the Central American Coalition for the Prevention of Juvenile Violence (CCPJV), were highly critical of that approach to the crisis in public safety and offered more effective alternatives. According to these speakers, from the U.S., Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, it is possible to prevent violence, intervene where violence occurs and reintegrate offenders. Jarrett Barrios, of the Massachusetts senate, said his state's rigid "clamp down" policy had actually caused an increase in crime rates, as research confirms the *mano dura* approach has. Massachusetts has since adopted an integrated program of prevention, better policing and an improved judicial system.

Conference panelists were drawn from government, businesses and civil society organizations that included the Pan-American Health Organization and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), both CCPJV members. Among the 350 conference participants were eight individuals representing recent IAF grantees working to address crime in El Salvador, one of the world's most violent countries. Even before hearing from the experts, grantees Fundación Salvadoreña para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo (REDES), Comité de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Económico-Social de Comunidades de Suchitoto (CRC) and Asociación Local para la Prevención de Desastres y el Desarrollo en el Bajo Lempa-Bahía de Jiquilisco (Asociación Mangle) were supporting community-based, youth-led initiatives that develop leaders and result in jobs and education.

"It's not just about violence; the real point is to find out what young people need and want," said Josué Esquivel, president of the Youth Business Club that participates in REDES' economic development project. The CRC's Lupe Barrera Guevara works



Kathryn Smith Pyle, right, with Mangle staff and youths.

Courtesy Asociación Mangle

in a region that suffered intense conflict and out-migration in the past two decades. He coordinates a consortium of youth groups that offers young people training in communications and museum programs, creating economic opportunities linked to community history and identity. “Our group is helping solve this problem,” he observed.—*Kathryn Smith Pyle*

Rethinking the African Diaspora

We all know that Afro-Latin Americans exist so now what do we do? How do we expose their concerns? These questions opened *Beyond Visibility: Rethinking the African Diaspora in Latin America*, a March 1-2 conference organized by the Afro-Latino Working Group at the University of California-Berkeley and sponsored by the Andrew Mellon Program and the IAF.

An audience of more than 250 witnessed a dynamic opening panel followed by Afro-Puerto Rican poet Ayan de León, Haitian dance group Rara Tou Limen and Grupo Cacique y Kongo in a drum performance. The spirited presentations by activists-academics Elizabeth Martínez and Carlos Muñoz called for a multi-racial democracy in the U.S. and encouraged the Afro-Latins, who bridge two cultures, to lead the charge. Speaking on the situation of Afro-Colombians, Claudia Mosquera of the Universidad de Cartagena cautioned that current academic research doesn’t address the depth of their challenges and problems. “Culturalists” in search of the presence of Africa in Colombia, she said, overlook dire social and economic conditions that include poverty, displacement and forced marginalization because of the on-going civil war. The audience was visibly surprised to hear Mosquera’s view that Colombia’s political conservatives understand the country’s race issue better than the guerrillas, who tend to dismiss it.

Stephen Small of U.C.-Berkeley welcomed 100 academics, activists and students to a session that included juried presentations on the Diaspora in the Americas by 12 graduate students, chosen from 60 entries submitted from throughout the U.S. and Latin America. Their research explored topics as varied as Afro-Brazilians in Argentina, *quilombos* and con-

servation in Brazil, *panlatinidad*, *garifuna* identity in Honduras and the depiction of blacks in Cuban poster art circa 1970. Five other students designed posters related to Afro-Colombian alliances with African Americans, the ambivalent identity of Cape Verdeans in Brazil, and to Afro-Latinos in the U.S.

The student papers generated a lively question-and-answer session and commentaries from such scholars as Mark Sawyer and Edward Telles of UCLA, Peter Wade from the University of Manchester, and Juan Flores and Miriam Jiménez-Román from New York University—all delighted with the new generation’s scholarship that shatters the myth of racial democracy in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. The University of California at Los Angeles offered to host next year’s conference. A publication is planned. For more information, visit <http://www.clas.berkeley.edu:7001/Research/working-groups/groups/afrolatino.html>.—*Linda B. Kolko, IAF vice president, Office of Operations*

Afro-Latin Educators Meet

“I was surprised to meet Afro-descendants from Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, and Bolivia. I didn’t think there were any in those countries.” That was the frequent reaction in Ecuador to Grupo Barlovento which had chosen the country as the site of its March 24-April 1 workshop sponsored by the Inter-American Foundation.

Grupo Barlovento, coordinated by Sheila Walker of the United States and Jesús “Chucho” García of Venezuela, in fact has Afro-descendent representatives from all nine Spanish-speaking South American countries. Its goal is for Afro-Latin Americans to tell the stories of their communities and of their people’s contributions to their respective nations from an “insider’s” perspective and to create educational materials about their communities in the context of the African diaspora in the Americas. Afro-Ecuadorian researcher Juan García, whose pioneering work in the field was supported by the IAF, will develop a curriculum to complement the volume of texts scheduled for publication in Venezuela.



IAF vice president Linda Borst Kolko, center, with Grupo Barlovento members Juan Pedro Machado of Mundo Afro, Lucia Molina of Argentina's Casa de la Cultura Indo-Afro-Americana, Oswaldo Bilbao Labatón of Peru's Comité de Desarrollo Etnico, Sheila Walker and Daniel Garcés Aragón of Colombia.

Irma Bautista of the National Confederation of Afro-Ecuadorians coordinated activities that included visits to IAF-funded projects in Guayaquil, the Chota/Mira Valley and Esmeraldas as well as a seminar with researchers from the Fondo Documental Afro-Andino of the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Quito and a conference on ethno-education that drew more than 60 participants, including a curriculum specialist from Ecuador's Ministry of Education. IAF president Larry Palmer opened the ethno-education conference and also hosted the group's breakfast meeting with Minister of Culture Antonio Preciado, Ecuador's first cabinet official of African descent.

Grupo Barlovento members were named honorary citizens of Esmeraldas by Ernesto Estupiñán Quintero, the city's first Afro-Ecuadorian mayor, who praised them for their work in helping to reveal the riches of the multicultural societies of the Americas.—*Sheila S. Walker, executive director, Afro Diaspora, Inc.*

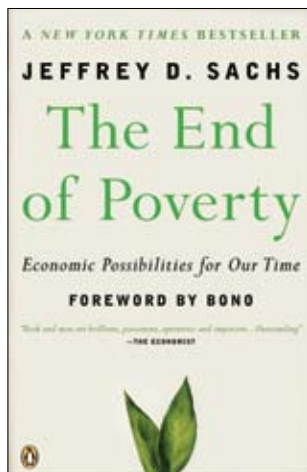
Afro-Latinas of Power

Women of Power II, a conference held March 20-24 and divided between New York and Boston, featured three panels on Afro-Latina activism directed at improving the conditions of African descendents and their countries. IAF-sponsored

panelists included Costa Ricans Epsy Campbell and Shirley Campbell-Barr; Puerto Ricans Ana Irma Rivera Lassén and María Elba Torres Muñoz; Yvette Modestín, a Panamanian residing in Boston; and Haitian-Venezuelan Evelyne Laurent-Perrault. The purpose of the conference, organized by the Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCADI) and The Global Afro Latino and Caribbean Initiative (GALCI) of Hunter College, was to highlight the accomplishments of African descendants and to continue to raise visibility. An enthusiastic audience in both cities appeared to draw inspiration from the discussions, even as they asked tough questions, including what the professional politicians on the panel had done for their constituents. *Women of Power II* offered the panelists the opportunity to network at a luncheon in New York and a meeting in Boston with the women's studies consortium of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A book on the participants and other Afro-Latina activists is planned as well as a DVD, and conference organizers want to share the activists' stories with community-based organizations and universities. The city of Boston honored the event with a resolution declaring March 23 Afro-Latina Leadership and Activist Day.—*Rosemarie Moreken, IAF analysis and evaluation specialist*

What Sachs Lacks

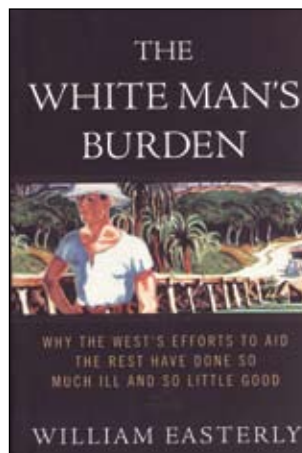
By Patrick Breslin



**The End of Poverty,
Economic Possibilities for
Our Time**

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

Penguin, 2005



**The White Man's
Burden, Why the West's
Efforts to Aid the Rest
Have Done So Much Ill
and So Little Good**

By William Easterly

Penguin, 2006

In his introduction to Jeffrey Sachs' *The End of Poverty*, Irish rock music star Bono sums up the book's argument with the claim that the present generation knows how to end extreme poverty around the world and can afford to do it. In a book of ringing but dubious propositions, that one needs parsing.

The more debatable of the two linked ideas is that we know how to end poverty. If that were true, the second argument—for spending more money—becomes more moral than financial. That's why you have to insist on the first before you can lobby for the second.

Bono, a world-class lobbyist for the world's poor, is the warm-up act here, getting the audience ready for the true rock star of development economics, Jeffrey D. Sachs, now director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and once a Harvard professor, consultant to inflation-racked governments and special advisor to former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Millennium Development Goals agreed to by 191 U.N. member states and intended to cut poverty in half by 2015. Sachs is also, by his own account, a confidant of many of the world's leaders. I counted 13 presidents or prime ministers

in his acknowledgements, not to mention heads of international agencies. What Sachs lacks is a single grassroots poverty activist on his A-list. Throughout this occasionally brilliant book, that absent figure, ghost-like, will repeatedly cast doubts on Sachs' arguments and Bono's conviction.

In *The White Man's Burden*, William Easterly also links two ideas, both flatly contradicting Sachs. Easterly thinks, first, that rather than too little, far too much has been spent on development, given the results achieved, and, second, because professed experts like Sachs really don't know how to end poverty, that much of that money—\$2.3 trillion by his calculation over the last half-century—has been wasted.

Easterly comes to this debate from a career in development, much of it as a senior research economist at the World Bank. Now an economics professor at New York University and a senior fellow at Washington's Center for Global Development, he is skeptical, even scornful, of ambitious goals, all-encompassing plans and the “planners” that devise them. The contrast between his book and Sachs' opens up a profound debate about development.

Sachs' book may be the last bugle call for the top-down, expert-designed and -run approach that has dominated development thinking and practice for over half a century. Its inspiring notes summon visions of a utopian future in which desperate poverty has been banished by science and technology, marshaled by higher aid spending, leading inexorably to more benefits for the world's poor. The familiar metaphors are there: the rungs of the ladder out of poverty recalling Walt Rostow's stages of economic growth in the 1960s; the development expert as wise physician, swiftly diagnosing the specific local causes of poverty and writing a prescription that will bring relief to struggling societies.

Unlike Easterly, Sachs came to development late. An academic interest in hyperinflation got him invited in 1985 to help the government of Bolivia, then facing what sardonic Latin Americans used to call "mature inflation," approaching 3,000 percent a year. In recounting his adventures in La Paz, and in chapters on Poland and Russia, Sachs provides an insider's look at high-stakes national and international finance. He claims pivotal roles in Bolivia's taming of inflation and in Poland's success with the convertibility of its currency and, not surprisingly, a more marginal role in a failed reform process as Russia skidded into klepto-capitalism. Sachs emerged

demolition of the idea that a defective culture dooms the poor to poverty.

But the core of Sachs' book is his plan for ending the plight of that one-sixth of humanity living in extreme poverty—1 billion people—and for ensuring that all the world's poor, including those in moderate poverty, whose basic needs are met, but just barely, have a chance to climb the ladder of development. His target date for the end of poverty is 2025, and an important milestone is to cut it in half by 2015 (from a 1990 baseline).

This can be achieved, Sachs argues, by much larger and more focused investments from the rich world that jump-start the process of capital accumulation, economic growth and rising household incomes. In his plan, the United Nations would oversee a coordinated effort by its agencies working with development plans drawn up by the governments of the poor countries. Bilateral agencies would channel much of their funds through this structure and concentrate the rest on smaller-scale projects and technical assistance.

The plan is complete, detailed and totally unrealistic. It assumes a level of international altruism for which there is scant precedent. It ignores bureaucratic and national rivalries and self-interests. It makes the mistake of confusing success in combat-

"Sachs' book may be the last bugle call for the top-down, expert-designed and -run approach that has dominated development thinking and practice for over half a century."

convinced that he was gaining a firsthand understanding of underdevelopment. Subsequent work in a more modest consulting role for the governments of China and India gave him expanded exposure to abject poverty and material for two of the better chapters in this book. Another chapter, "Myths and Magic Bullets," is a fascinating comparison of underlying economic realities at moments of transition in China and Eastern Europe and contains a brisk

ing specific diseases, the one area in which top-down foreign assistance has worked, with development success in general. Vaccination programs are single-bullet solutions, and resources and political will can be marshaled for the short term to carry them out. Perhaps we need to treat health separately from the discussion of poverty elimination because it distorts that discussion. The more general development challenges of poverty—a mix of economic, envi-

“More than anything else, Easterly is railing against the tendency for aid planners to set generalized goals like ending poverty or fostering economic growth.”

ronmental, cultural, historical, social, political and personal factors—are much more intractable. Finally, Sachs ignores the fact that all of what he is promising has been promised before, in every decade over the last half-century, as Easterly gleefully points out.

And perhaps even Sachs himself has lost a bit of the faith. In the preface to the paperback edition, he seems to back away from the fulsome praise of political leaders in his original acknowledgements. Now, he says, “When the end of poverty arrives, it will be citizens in a million communities rather than a handful of political leaders, who will have turned the tide.” All those presidents and prime ministers and heads of major international agencies and banks described so glowingly are now reduced to “a handful of political leaders” apparently standing ineffectively by. What has happened? Possibly the failure to deliver on the promises of more funds and the implementation of more plans?

But if Sachs is placing his faith in the world’s millions, it is fair to ask what he really knows about them. On the evidence of visits to rural Kenya and urban India, the only time in the entire book we meet the poor, Sachs betrays a naiveté about how development works on the ground. In Kenya, he visits a poor village as a dispensing angel, announcing that he has raised money for the inhabitants. He’s impressed that the villagers agree to organize themselves to spend it, and doesn’t seem aware that he could get the same result at a community meeting on Manhattan’s Upper West Side.

In Mumbai, he encounters the reality of third-world urban poverty when he visits people living in cardboard shelters within 10 feet of the railroad tracks. He sees the deplorable conditions, but also the effectiveness of the organization they have created to protect their rights. To his credit, he actually perceives how impressive are their accomplishments,

but somehow he doesn’t realize the implications for his big plan.

There are several tip-offs to the distance between Sachs and the people he proposes to save from poverty. We never learn anyone’s name in the few instances in which Sachs is surrounded by the poor instead of fellow economists and world leaders. Even in the book’s amateurish photographs, the poor are at a distance and unidentified. And when Sachs confidently tosses out instances of how quickly a development innovation will bring improvements, he can get the details wrong. He offers a switch from traditional maize to vanilla beans in one example, but he thinks vanilla grows on trees when the plant is actually a vine. He posits a profitable vanilla crop in a year, when it takes three years after the seeds are planted for beans to develop. In his chapter on “clinical economics,” where he provides a seven-part checklist to help the development expert diagnose poverty, there is not a single question about poor people as social beings. They’re just objects.

William Easterly’s book is the opposite of Sachs’ in almost every way. He directly challenges the “big push” idea of greatly increasing foreign assistance totals for an all-out assault on poverty. He details the various incarnations of this approach since the 1950s: the cycle of plans announced with much fanfare, the gradually creeping frustration and disillusionment, the eventual unspoken agreement in the development community to politely avert one’s eyes as failure becomes clear—all followed a decade or so later by calls for a new big push. The preference by politicians and bureaucrats for big plans, Easterly says, buttressed by the conviction of the superiority of the rich over the poor, is what drives this cycle. He also notes, and has fun with, the pattern that each turn of the cycle invariably brings calls for a doubling of aid to end world poverty. It’s part of the

planners' obsession with the amount to be spent rather than with the results eventually achieved.

Easterly goes after two huge assumptions integral to the big-push approach: that free markets and democratic institutions must be created to make the assistance effective, and that both will be strengthened by successful development. In two concise chapters rich with insights drawn from a wide range of anthropological, political, historical and economic research, Easterly drives home two important conclusions: Both free markets and democracy clearly work. Neither can be successfully imposed from the outside.

More than anything else, Easterly is railing against the tendency for aid planners to set generalized goals like ending poverty or fostering economic growth. He argues instead for concrete and measurable goals: dealing with malaria, for example, by getting mosquito nets to villages through tested channels or raising incomes by helping farmers market their goods. He dislikes large-scale, coordinated efforts in which various agencies share responsibility for reaching development targets. When many agencies are responsible, Easterly points out, no one agency is individually responsible. Another important observation is that there is precious little feedback from the supposed beneficiaries of big-push foreign assistance that could serve as early warning of wrong paths chosen, or at least permit course corrections along the way.

Easterly's book is an entertaining read. Each chapter, no matter how theoretical the topic, is populated with real people in real places. Where Sachs describes a mythical farmer switching from maize to vanilla beans, Easterly tells of real innovators who have made real switches, with real results. Consequently, chapters like "You Can't Plan a Market" are a vivid tour through the complex social and institutional arrangements that undergird markets and, at the same time, an introduction to some fascinating individuals in the marketplaces of specific countries. The book relays dozens of anecdotes and vignettes gathered either from research or from Easterly's own travels. The people he meets have names and are busy solving their problems. And in

them, Easterly sees an alternative. Scornful of the planners with their notions of eliminating poverty with top-down approaches, Easterly suggests instead that more of these "searchers"—social entrepreneurs—be sought out and supported.

But it is not clear that Easterly himself is aware of just how significant a force his searchers have already become. He sounds somewhat wistful when he suggests that there "should be much further exploration of mechanisms that give control of aid resources directly to the poor and let them choose what they most want and need . . . This is not easy, but I suspect this is the future of foreign aid."

In fact, especially in Latin America, the infrastructure of leadership for bottom-up development has already emerged. It is made up of thousands of grassroots groups and nongovernmental organizations, many of them with a long history of progress against the region's widespread poverty. They wrestle with the same challenges that international foreign assistance has for more than half a century, but they get things done. There is no need to wait for the future to effectively channel a much greater proportion of foreign assistance through this development infrastructure.

Finally, neither Sachs nor Easterly seems aware that their dialogue is an echo of one that took place 35 years ago, when the publication of *We Don't Know How: An Independent Audit of What They Call Success in Foreign Assistance*, by William and Elizabeth Paddock, recounting the failures of foreign aid, was followed by *They Know How*, the Inter-American Foundation's book based on its initial five years of responsive funding of grassroots organizations. But today's rerun of that debate, and especially Easterly's pungent indictment of top-down foreign assistance, could finally move donors toward a serious investment in what the IAF has always called grassroots development. ❀

Afro-Argentines in Focus: Three Films



Miriam V. Gomes.

Afroargentinos

Jorge Fortes and Diego Ceballos: 2002

Sodad

Lorena Fernández: 2005

Negro Che

Alberto Masliah: 2006

After Argentina's return to democracy in 1983, Africans and African descendants, whose existence in the country had been denied for decades, began to revitalize and reconfigure their organi-

zations. Human rights concepts were broadened to include their struggle against discrimination and it became possible to articulate the racism suffered. Access to the media, dialogue with the government and exchanges with black institutions across the continent brought reflection, a public presence and organizational growth.

Afro-Argentine communities were formed at three points in history:

- During the African slave trade of the 16th century and its consolidation in the 17th and 18th centuries, hundreds of thousands of Africans entered the port of Buenos Aires as slave labor.
- From the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, immigrants from Cape Verde arrived in Argentina driven by hunger, extreme poverty and the lack of opportunity under the colonial administration. This community now numbers approximately 15,000.
- In the latter half of the 20th century, especially in the 1990s, economic and political factors brought a new wave of immigration from Senegal, Nigeria, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and the Congo.

The First Pilot Test for Measuring the Afro-descendent Population, a survey financed by the World Bank, was conducted in 2005 by Argentina's National Institute for Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), the February 3 National University and two consultants from the Argentine Chamber of Afro-Organizations (Lucia Molina, president of the Indo-African-American House of Culture of Santa Fe, and Miriam Gomes, vice president of the Cape Verdean Society of Buenos Aires). The pilot revealed that between 5 and 6 percent of the individuals surveyed identified themselves as of African descent. Earlier, Oxford University researchers had estimated the population at around 5 percent, based on their analysis of genetic markers from blood banks of public hospitals. Another study, by the University of Buenos Aires, showed that up to 10 percent of the inhabitants of Argentine port and urban areas have African ancestors.

The impressive leap toward greater visibility has also included cultural productions, among them three films featuring Argentina's black community:

Jorge Fortes and Diego Ceballos premiered their documentary *Afroargentinos* (75 minutes) in the San Martín Cultural Center in 2002. It won first prize at the CINESUL Festival in Brazil (2003) and an award from International Movement of Documentary Film Makers for Miriam Gomes. The movie features testimony on racism and discrimination as experienced in Argentina. One moving account is related by Patricio Andrade, a Cape Verdean boxer, who had had a brilliant career as an amateur boxer for the Argentine Army. When the time came for a promotion, however, he was discharged from the military because—according to his superiors—"a black can't give orders to whites." The testimony contrasts with the words of some of the best known Argentine thinkers—Manuel Belgrano, Domingo F. Sarmiento, Juan B. Alberdi—demonstrating the Euro-centric attitude.

In 2005, Lorena Fernández released her short documentary *Sodad* (24 minutes) on the Cape Verdean immigrants who settled near the ports and worked in port-related activities. The emotional stories from these islanders' lives reflect their perceptions of *sodad*, a word that comes from the Portuguese *saudade*, meaning nostalgia or melancholy. In Cape Verdean Creole it takes on multiple, even contradictory connotations: the desire to stay while needing to go, the desire to leave but the inability to do so, the yearning for what was left behind but the happiness of having had it for a while. The film shows the solidarity that unites the community, the preservation of its rites and the re-creation of island traditions in this far away land. *Sodad* was selected for showing at the Amiens International Film Festival in France, the First International Festival of Audiovisual Work in Chile and the Festival of Anthropological and Social Film of the Museum of Natural Sciences in La Plata, Argentina. It won the Argentine Cinematographic Research Center's award for best documentary.

Director Alberto Masliah premiered his debut production *Negro Che* (95 minutes) in the Buenos Aires Museum of Latin American Art (MALBA) in October 2006. This documentary paints a picture of a period in the social and cultural life of the descendants of the first Africans to arrive in Argentina, the *negros criollos* or Afro-Argentines. In traditional *afroporteño* society, the term *negro che* designated the stereotypical poor black man, still clinging to dance and drums, elements of little prestige in a Europeanized society. The term *negro usted* applied to the black with literary pretensions, an aspiration to upward mobility and a desire to become more "white." *Negro Che* is structured around the call to revive the dances of the legendary Shimmy Club in the Casa Suiza of Buenos Aires, where Afro-Argentines had gathered for more than five decades. In addition to the preparations for the commemorative event held July 23, 2005, it chronicles the formation of the Argentine *candombe* group "Familia Rumba Nuestra," composed of Horacio Delgadino (whose sister, María "Pocha" Lamadrid, matriarch of

a prototypical Afro-Argentine family, founded the organization ¡Africa Vive!) and his sons. *Negro Che* also features the experiences of other Afro-Argentines and members of the Cape Verdean community as people of African descent.

The Argentine historian Ricardo Rodríguez Mola has confirmed that *tango* comes from the Kiluba language of the vast Bantu linguistic complex, and it initially meant society, congregation and, by extension, meeting places. Black Congo-Angolans gathered in "houses and places of tango" but gradually shifted during the 18th and 19th centuries to dance academies. By 1865, the first written tango lyrics appeared, along with the names of the authors. One of the most popular is "El Entrerriano" by Afro-Argentine Rosendo Mendizábal. *Negro Che* includes charming and extremely relevant tango scenes featuring Afro-Argentine dance professional Facundo Posadas and his wife, Kelly. Facundo, who descends from a line of composers and musicians involved with the tango since its origin, explains in words and demonstrates in movement how African culture was reborn and recreated in the music and dance of the River Plate.—Miriam V. Gomes, professor of American studies, University of Buenos Aires

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**Más allá de los Promedios:
Afrodescendientes en América Latina**

Edited by Josefina Stubbs and Hiska N. Reyes

The World Bank: Washington, D.C., 2006

Available in Spanish

African descendants are said to comprise approximately one-fifth of the population of Latin America, and they are desperately poor. But accurate information on this group's demographics and living conditions is sparse. Without it, their poverty, invisibility and the gross inequality they face cannot be addressed effectively. This series of five paperback volumes from The World Bank documents the inclusion of African descendants in national censuses and household surveys in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras and Peru.

Between 2003 and 2005, teams composed of staff from census bureaus and representatives of African descendent groups in the five countries worked to gather some hard data. This was not easy given, first, the difficulty of formulating survey questions and categories in an undeniable context of past racial discrimination and, second, the stigma attached to self-identifying as an African descendant. Each team addressed these challenges in its own way. The detailed socio-economic data resulting on each country vary according to the respective data-collection tools and census practices, and this impedes a comparison across countries on specific indicators.

Nonetheless, the series marks a start for collection and improved collection, and future comparisons should be possible.

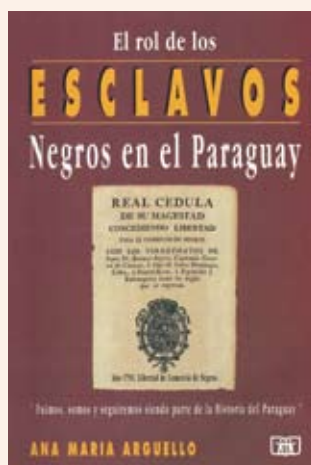
The volume on Argentina details a pilot survey of African descendants, who had not been included in any census since 1887. It concentrates on the team involved, the training pilots and validation tests conducted, and the material developed. The volume on Peru, which had no statistics at all on its African descendants, covers a study using self-identification to survey five Afro-Peruvian communities. Methods relying on race or language, which might have proved useful elsewhere, were not applicable to Peru because of greater racial mixing and the continuing effects of urbanization and migration on cultural and social distinctiveness.

Colombia's enactment of Law 70 in 1991, addressing African descendants, provided for their inclusion in the 1993 census—the first time they had been included since 1918. This volume covers the improved census of 2004, which included a quality of life survey that allowed for a comparison of Afro-Colombians' assessment of their needs and their prioritization by gender, age, and urban and rural residency. Ecuador began incorporating questions specific to Afro-Ecuadorians in 2000, and the volume on Ecuador covers data collected on education, employment, health and participants' shared recommendations for improving future censuses.

The volume on Honduras covers a 2001 census and a 2002 household survey which in addition to

population numbers included socio-economic data on African descendants. The World Bank recommends continuing to include ethnicity in future censuses and household surveys in Honduras. However, because of the increased acculturation of younger generations, some of the standard indicators are inadequate. Therefore, to improve the accuracy of the results, the Bank suggests adding questions on language (going back to the grandparents' generation) and on special foods, which might better indicate African descent. There is also a need to collect data for the Mosquitia and Islas de la Bahía, areas not previously included in the household surveys.

This rich series should prove interesting not only to individuals working on censuses and surveys in other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, but also to any individuals or organizations that desire to work with African descendent populations.—Rosemarie Moreken



**El rol de los Esclavos:
Negros en el Paraguay**

By Ana María Argüello
Martínez

Centro Editorial
Paraguay: Asunción,
1999

Available in Spanish

This book documents
the contributions of
African descendants
in Paraguay since the

founding of the republic in 1813 and lays out a framework for understanding their origins in the country even earlier.

The first black slave on record in Paraguay arrived with his Portuguese owner in 1613, according to a contemporaneous writing by General Francisco González de Santa Cruz, and an additional 1,087 blacks arrived soon after. In 1683, the Spanish government banned the import of African and African

descendent slaves into Paraguay. Smuggling then became a problem. At one point, Spain negotiated with Portugal the return of a group of slaves, along with contraband sugar, tobacco, wine and hard liquor. The ban notwithstanding, Arguello documents the apparent sale of Africans on the open market in 1694.

Slaves faced legal obstacles to marrying, and intermarriage was discouraged by a complex of regulations solidified over 200 years that required husband and wife to be of the same race and class. In the 1780s, an unevenly enforced Spanish law guaranteed asylum in Paraguay for Africans fleeing bondage elsewhere, leading to the settlement of such towns as Pueblo de Mulatos de Tabapy. That the slave trade continued anyway is supported by recorded sales and transfers of ownership dated between 1820 and 1855.

Paraguay's Free Womb Law, providing for the eventual freedom of children born of slave mothers, was enacted in 1842 as a gradual way to abolish slavery. While slaves held by foreigners who registered them by a specified deadline were later exempted, those not timely registered could petition the state or the police for a declaration of freedom which prohibited the owner from claiming compensation. Beginning in 1865, enslaved African descendants were recruited by the Paraguayan army, or donated or sold by their owners, to fight in wars against neighboring countries. Within a year, they numbered 10,000 soldiers. In recognition of this contribution to the war effort, the Paraguayan government declared slavery abolished on Oct. 2, 1869.

Argüello examines the condition of slaves in Paraguay through vignettes detailing individual experiences and looks at entire regions such as Villa Rica whose African descendants comprised 15 percent of the population in the 1680s. She also uses fertility rates and regional statistics to support her conclusions on the dismal quality of life slaves endured. Most valuable are scanned copies of original documentation of the slave trade in Paraguay: lists of free and enslaved Africans and African descendants, legislation, punishment and demographic information.—Judith Morrison



De Negros a Afros: Ley 70, Poder, e Identidades en el Pacífico Sur de Colombia

By **Luís Fernando Botero Villegas**

Editorial Nuevo Milenio:
Medellín, 2005

Available in Spanish

The passage of Law 70 in 1993 marked the first statutory acknowledgement of African descendent communities in Colombia since the abolition of slavery in 1851. Law 70 recognizes Afro-Colombians as an ethnic group and establishes their rights to collective title to their traditional lands; by 2003, eligible Afro-Colombian communities had been granted title to over 5 million hectares. In *De Negros a Afros: Ley 70, Poder, e Identidades en el Pacífico Sur de Colombia*, Luís Fernando Botero Villegas looks at the history of Afro-Colombian social movements and identity by exploring the history and implementation of Law 70 on Colombia's southern Pacific coast.

Botero Villegas argues that Law 70 was not “a gift from the state” but the product of years of work at the grassroots. He traces this history through black consciousness-raising movements of the 1970s and 1980s and their evolution into activist organizations with economic, political and cultural agendas. These organizations are credited with assuring that the rights of Afro-Colombian communities were addressed in the 1991 constitution via Transitory Article 55 which required the drafting of a law on the cultural and territorial rights of Afro-Colombians. Over the following two years, community organizations, with support from the Catholic diocese of Tumaco, worked diligently to develop Law 70 and since then have been the most active parties to its implementation.

The author does not shy away from critiquing Law 70. It does not, for example, recognize a contiguous Afro-Colombian territory as originally intended. Instead, it grants collective title to the

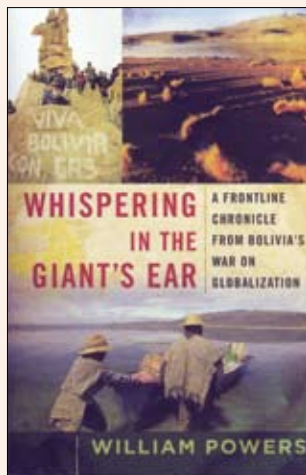
individual communities that can substantiate their land claims. Government funding for the extensive organizing, planning and documentation required to bring claims under the law has been almost non-existent, leaving the process largely dependent on support from international donors. More than half of Afro-Colombians live in urban areas and their impoverished circumstances are not addressed by Law 70; and land rights are of little avail in rural communities where the drug trade and armed conflict continue to forcibly displace residents. Ultimately, Botero Villegas declares Law 70 “a tool to help us achieve our goals, not the goal in and of itself.” For all that has been accomplished, he says, there is much more still to be done.

This discussion in *De Negros a Afros* is organized through a lengthy analysis of the relevant discourse, the publications, letters, training materials, and meeting minutes that document this history. Perhaps the most interesting insight offered by the author results from his analysis of the use of the terms *afro* and *negro*. He maintains that *afro*, alone or in its many hyphenated forms (Afro-descendent, Afro-Colombian, Afro-American), tends to be used mostly in academic and elite settings; most black Colombians, he insists, define themselves simply as *negros*. Botero Villegas believes this distinction to be an important one: *afro* discounts the multi-ethnic heritage of most Colombian blacks, while *negro* can encompass the diversity of the black experience in Colombia and throughout the diaspora.

According to Botero Villegas, Afro-Colombians have only just begun the complex and dynamic process of forming an ethnic identity. He points out the very different realities faced by urban and rural communities; the distinct history of those communities formed by runaway slaves, or *cimarrones*, and those founded after abolition; and a range of political and geographic allegiances. A cohesive sense of identity, he argues, must be built on social and cultural commonalities *and* take into account this diversity.

De Negros a Afros provides the reader a thorough grounding in the history of Law 70—perhaps too thorough. The author's many interesting insights are

often lost in his tedious detailing of the discourse. At the same time, the reader is left wishing for more information on these fascinating Colombian communities.—*Theresa Logan, IAF program staff assistant*



Whispering in the Giant's Ear

By William Powers

Bloomsbury: New York, 2006

Available in English

William Powers' new book, *Whispering in the Giant's Ear, A Frontline Chronicle from Bolivia's War on Globalization*, covers four years

(2001–2005) in the life of an environmental activist working in the trenches of Bolivia's rugged rural areas. Bolivia has only 9 million people but it hosts the world's sixth largest tropical forest and a vast expanse of biodiversity in various parks, protected areas and indigenous territories. It is also home to some of most politically mobilized indigenous peoples in the world. Both themes interest Powers, and he crafts a lively narrative to connect them. The result is a successful stew—part memoir, part travelogue, part history and part political reporting—offering a superb, beautifully written introduction to this fascinating nation just when its indigenous citizens are rising up to claim their rights and reverse the course of history.

Power's story begins high in the Andean city of La Paz, where angst over his lifestyle and working conditions as a privileged foreign aid official in a sea of poverty pushes him into a more hands-on position with a Bolivian organization undertaking a conservation project in a national park in the Santa Cruz department. His new job brings him into contact with wealthy international philanthropists under-

writing carbon sequestration, a "green globalization" approach. Others involved include Bolivian professionals, an international environmental economist and the indigenous Chiquitanos whose interests and territorial rights are central to the conservation strategy. As Powers reveals, Bolivia is renowned among environmentalists as the site of splendidly innovative projects for protecting the Amazon, and his own organization is on the cutting edge.

With his keen eye for detail and his vivid prose, Powers treats the reader to memorable descriptions of wildlife, landscapes, and people—bringing forth intriguing characters among the haves and have-nots alike. His narrative also produces reflections and ruminations about social and economic development, the Amazon, and other global environmental challenges. He offers candid opinions on everything from the U.S. drug policy to Bolivia's new and growing "landless movement" challenging prevailing inequities in tenure. Enjoyable "foreigner-in-the-Third-World" vignettes include accounts of digging jeeps out of mud ruts on backwater roads and of the overwhelming panic caused by swarming colonies of bees, which only subsided when local Chiquitanos calmed his nerves and provided practical advice. The reader visits training programs for the Chiquitanos and senses the fascination and challenge of the job along with the writer's ambivalence about his own inadequacies. Powers also has much to say and observe about the benefits of Bolivia's popular eco-tourist sites, including ones in the Andes where his travels take him. He readily savors Bolivia's rich cultural expressions whenever he finds them, which is often.

Powers, the environmental activist, is savvy about power wielded by Santa Cruz's logging, ranching, drug-trafficking and agro-based businesses. Soybean cultivation over decades, resulting in the destruction of tropical forests and degradation of fragile farmland and waterways, is the dark underbelly of "successful" regional development and economic globalization. It is an example of how the intersection of political and business interests determines natural resource management in Bolivia and also relegates indigenous



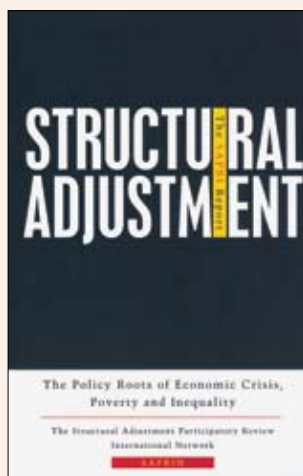
Courtesy APCOB

Marcelo Surubí, an indigenous Chiquitano forestry technician who works with IAF grantee Ayuda para el Campesino Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB), and Ana Hurtado García, his mother.

Bolivians to second-class citizenship and paltry “trickle-down” economic benefits.

As the story moves along, however, it is overtaken by another narrative as indigenous peoples and their allies across this sprawling nation mobilize to protest multinational corporate ownership of water and gas and the disappointing effects of textbook neo-liberal reforms on their income and job prospects. Powers’ activist Chiquitano sidekick, Salvador, becomes the thread connecting the environmental theme to the larger social-justice movement. Sweeping nonviolent demonstrations captured the imagination of awestruck citizens around the globe as indigenous Bolivians blockaded roads, marched and used other tactics to paralyze the operations of the state and the

economy and bring about an election that transformed the political landscape. They succeed in democratically replacing an elite-based political establishment with Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first indigenous president, and a bold agenda of social, economic and political reform. Although Powers ends before the electoral triumph, his book nonetheless provides a fresh, sympathetic, informed and well-written perspective on some of the most important events leading up to it and catapulting Bolivia into a new era.—Kevin Healy, IAF representative for Bolivia and author of *Llamas, Weavings and Organic Chocolate*, Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and Amazon of Bolivia



Structural Adjustment: The SAPRI Report

*By The Structural
Adjustment Participatory
Review International
Network*

*Palgrave Macmillan: New
York, 2004*

*Intermón Oxfam:
Barcelona, 2005*

*Available in English and
Spanish*

Structural adjustment—the term has been a panacea for some and a curse for others. Political leaders and development experts have praised it and condemned it, but few have actually measured its impact on all sectors of a country's economy. The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRI), a coalition of civil society organizations from nine countries on four continents, set out to do just that. The total effort was coordinated by The Development GAP of Washington, D.C., under the leadership of Steve and Doug Hellinger.

The initiative began with the World Bank's endorsement and participation. "What I am looking for—and inviting your help in—is a different way of doing business in the future," bank president James Wolfensohn wrote to SAPRI in 1996 when the group was still incipient. But the cooperative spirit would not hold for the duration of the study. The Bank officially withdrew before it was completed and would not comment on SAPRI's final report.

For anyone in the development profession, this book is compulsory reading. Contributing researchers examined documents and statistics, surveyed local stakeholders and conducted participatory reviews whereby affected individuals from various social sectors share their experiences. The results were compiled into country reports that were then condensed, synthesized and published as the report tellingly titled *Structural Adjustment: The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis, Poverty and Inequality*. Distilling

the information gathered from members of 3,500 grassroots organizations, it measures how structural adjustment policies impact all levels of society, but especially the people most affected—urban workers, farmers, small-business people, indigenous groups, women and the young. Country by country, the report exposes the disparity between stated objectives to generate savings and foreign exchange, by opening markets and reducing the state's role in the economy, and the practical impact on ordinary citizens.

The findings are not surprising. What catches attention is their connection to many political and economic issues that are the focus of debate in developed countries. The migration of undocumented workers, the professional brain-drain, the re-appearance of diseases once thought to have been eradicated and the destruction of the environment have a detrimental impact in both the North and the South. Rather than being correctable by structural adjustment policies, the report points out, these debilitating circumstances are the direct results of implementing such policies.

To the economic purist, the report's conclusions are not supported by rigorous statistical analysis and rely too much on qualitative surveys, anecdotal evaluations and individual perceptions. The authors respond that volumes of statistical data are available in government archives and on file with the World Bank. The purpose of their book, they contend, is to present the impact of structural adjustment on those who are overlooked when results are gathered.

Will these findings influence World Bank and IMF decision-makers and government officials of countries negotiating for financial assistance during an economic crisis? In a final chapter, the authors observe, "The Bank's unwillingness to engage in a participatory and public policy-making forum of this type with built-in accountability is a telling commentary on the institution's continued refusal to entertain new departures in national policy, even with major political change and shifts in economic thinking taking place across South America." While not an answer to the question, the comment fails to inspire optimism.—Wilbur Wright, IAF representative for Peru

IAF Publications Still Available

English

Spanish



Congress created the IAF in 1969 to respond to the needs of people at the grassroots. Eight years later, IAF staff reflected on their experience with self-help development and produced *They Know How*. The title refers to *We Don't Know How*, an earlier exposé of foreign aid failures. Using IAF's relationships with

94 grantees, this book maintains that the organized poor are the experts on improving conditions in their communities and can be responsible for their own self-help projects. A classic in development literature, the work was reprinted in 1991.

Spanish



Nuevas Políticas Urbanas, a series of studies edited by Charles A. Reilly, formerly the IAF's director of research and thematic studies, captures the relationship of government and the third sector in various countries. Although the studies were completed in 1990 and 1991, they are still relevant to the debate as to who should

provide social services and how to pay for them. The book makes the point that 72 percent of Latin Americans live in cities. It looks to NGOs to join with, rather than oppose, city government in addressing the needs of these urban dwellers.

English

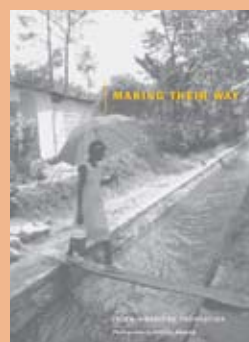
Spanish



Before its suspension in 2000, the IAF's doctoral fellowship program supported degree candidates in U.S. universities in their exploration of topics whose diversity is reflected in *Inquiry at the Grassroots: An Inter-American Foundation Fellowship Reader*. William Glade, then senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson

International Center, Charles A. Reilly, then director of thematic studies at IAF, and Diane Bendahmane, then technical director for information services with the International Science and Technology Institute, joined forces to edit this collection of reports on aspects of development and poverty alleviation published in 1993. The IAF recently reinstated its doctoral fellowship program.

SPECIAL OFFER



Miguel Sayago's book of photography, *Making Their Way*, is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Creole, and can be ordered free of charge from the IAF on a first-come, first-

served basis. See the description on page 75.

Order your free copy from info@iaf.gov. This offer applies only to the publications on these pages. All other resources reviewed must be obtained from other sources.

IAF Photography for Exhibit

Antonio, a young Honduran boy, peeks out from under a cascade of clean water. Raymonde Louis, a Haitian school girl, peers intently into the camera. Lizabeth Caravelo Valenzuela, an indigenous Yaqui Mexican, relaxes in the kitchen of her brand new home. These are just a few the photographs offered in three traveling exhibits that share insights into some of the more than 4,600 IAF-funded projects of the past 36 years:

- *Changing Lives*. Award-winning British photographer Sean Sprague has been capturing grassroots development in action for the IAF since 1977. With impeccable artistic instincts, he portrays beneficiaries in their homes, schools, neighborhoods and workplaces and lets their reality speak for itself.
- *Making Their Way* by Chilean photographer Miguel Sayago captures the IAF's work as well as the diversity of our hemisphere: fishing enclaves and mountain villages, urban slums and rural communities, and the indigenous peoples and Afro-Latinos who comprise a disproportionately large percentage of the region's poor.
- *On the Border* by Mark Caicedo shows self-help efforts along the U.S.-Mexico border where the IAF and its NGO partners are helping residents confront the challenges of proximity, including migration, jobs, environmental degradation, and security.

To view selected photos and photo essays, log onto www.iaf.gov. To arrange for an exhibit, contact the IAF at info@iaf.gov. Upon request the IAF can provide speakers to discuss grassroots development.



Raúl Enrique Bidart, Grassroots Visionary

The IAF and the development community lost a bright and most creative colleague and friend with the passing of Raúl Bidart on Aug. 15, 2006. Born in Uruguay, Raúl was a citizen of the world. His contributions to grassroots development are visible and highly valued throughout the Southern Cone and as far away as Washington and France.

In the early 1970s, when IAF began its work, Raúl was director of the Instituto de Promoción Económico-Social del Uruguay (IPRU), an NGO founded in 1965 to assist disadvantaged sectors in developing the leadership and strategies that permit groups of young people, small farmers and women to exercise their rights as citizens toward building a more just society. As an early IAF grantee, IPRU provided technical assistance to two subsequent grantee organizations of dairy farmers, Sociedad de Fomento Rural de Durazno and Sociedad de Fomento Rural de Paysandú, and to Comisión Nacional de Fomento Rural, an association representing small-farmer cooperatives. For nearly two decades, Raúl and IPRU helped craft the IAF's program in Uruguay (see *The Small Farmer Sector in Uruguay: A Partnership in Development Cooperation*, IAF: 1989).

Raúl was one of the earliest supporters of Manos del Uruguay, and was instrumental in founding Central Lanera Uruguay, which this year celebrates 40 years of service to small farmers in the classification and marketing of wool. When IAF was considering a \$1 million award to Central Lanera, still the IAF's largest single grant to a Uruguayan organization, Raúl suggested treating the funds as a loan—"repayable" over 10 years, to a new financial institution he was creating, Fundación Uruguay de Cooperación y Desarrollo Solidarios (FUNDASOL).



Raúl was the driving force behind FUNDASOL, although others directed the institution. He successfully capitalized it with the grant "repayments" and, with major financing that he obtained from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Germany's foreign assistance agency, FUNDASOL designed and managed one of Uruguay's first small-enterprise credit and development programs. Raúl's efforts helped rank FUNDASOL as a leader among NGOs serving small

and micro-entrepreneurs in Latin America.

In the mid-1990s, the IAF contracted Raúl and two other Uruguayan professionals to provide services for grantees and proponents. With the advent of MERCOSUR later in the decade, Raúl and IAF contractors from Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil worked together to support the creation of the Coordinadora de Productores Familiares del MERCOSUR (COPROFAM). An IAF grant funded research, meetings and training, ultimately permitting COPROFAM to obtain official status and participate in ministerial-level MERCOSUR meetings. To this day, COPROFAM actively defends the interests of farm families in matters related to regional integration. Raúl's work led the French Fondation pour le Progrès de l'Homme to recognize and support COPROFAM in recent years, and, less than one month before his untimely passing, he was helping COPROFAM draft a plan for its institutional development and consolidation.

A true visionary, Raúl Bidart was held in high esteem by Uruguayans of all social and economic strata. He is survived by his wife of 29 years, Beatriz, by his daughter Carola, her husband Gerardo and by the light of his life, his granddaughter Agustina. —Cynthia Ferrin, United States Peace Corps, former IAF representative for Uruguay



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